



HOLY
WATER
FROM THE WEST

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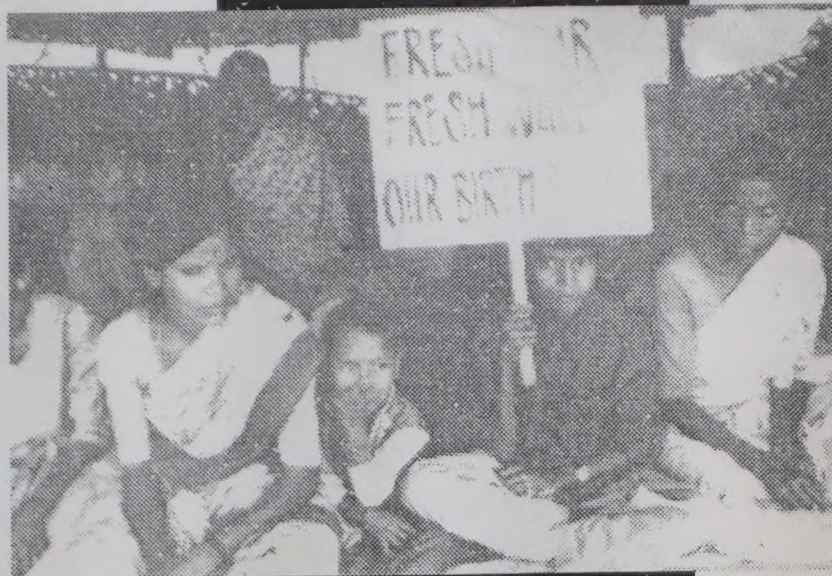
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INTRODUCTION

A couple of years back, Vietnam decided to put up a campaign against 'cultural invasion' and the big signboards of Coca-Cola and Pepsi in English were defaced. The campaign was rolled back after the investors' protests. The government revoked the campaign stating that English signs could stay as long as they contained Vietnamese words in larger letters than the English. The corporations had no problem in conforming to this regulation as they had greater stakes at hand. On the other side of the front the campaigners against cultural invasion could claim victory over the Multinationals and American culture. Phoney resistances of this genre against global cultural onslaught through market are taking place globally, while the real threats loom large over third world communities and the poor. In the same vein, most of the resistances in India and abroad against Coca-Cola and Pepsi bear the burden of Anti-American slogans. In fact, this is another kind of trivialisation or veiling of real hard issues concerning these soft drink behemoths.

The dangers inflicted by the soft drinks are multifaceted. They are hazardous to health and the usual consumers are at the risk of serious health problems. On the other side, the making of the soft drinks are shrouded in mystery, and the consumers are fully ignorant of what they swallow. The story of global market domination by the giants of the industry entails dubious human rights violations and ruthless exploitation.

Anti-American slogans will not fully incorporate a world of other real life problems created by the global soft drink mammoths. They have already established themselves as true representatives of global market culture and as the worst models of corporate domination over people and natural resources. In their birthplace, America, these companies have created millions of over sugared kids who are addicted to the junk food culture. While the poor Latin Americans, still blind to the health hazards of the soft drinks are feeding their

babies with Coca-Cola.

The soft drinks, originated accidentally as people tried to imitate natural springs, are now drying up natural drinking water resources in the villages of India where the soft drink brands have built their bottling plants. It is the irony and arrogance of the market that thousands of poor are devoid of their drinking water to serve Coca-Cola and Pepsi to a few hundred. In Kanchikkode, Palakkad, Kerala, Pepsi bottling plant consumes 2.2million litres of water daily, while 61,000 people of the locality use only 1.5 million litres daily. As the result of the soft drink giant's water exploitation, the people of the locality suffer acute water shortage. The story of corporate deception and ruthless exploitation in Plachimada in the same district has invited public ire. The people of the tribal village are on a relentless struggle against Coca-Cola's water-theft.

We witness a no holds barred invasion by the global corporate giants in to our economy directly affecting our lives. While the governments play in tune with the corporate designs, the common people are forced to take desperate measures to keep themselves alive. The big corporations are now targeting the basics- water and food of the Third World. And the governments and mainstream political formations indulge in bogus battles against the so-called 'westernisation' and 'Americanisation' derailing the real struggles.

This book attempts to view Coca-Cola in the light of ongoing struggles for survival by the villagers of India. The resistances in India are put against other anti- Coca-Cola struggles in different parts of the world. The rationale of this book is to provide a better understanding of corporate underhandedness and to show how far the MNCs would go to make profit.

One

FIZZ-STORY OF SOFT DRINKS

The thirsty travellers reach a poor arid North Indian village only to find a 'dirty' well. The beautiful women wanderers give a condescending look at the well but being so thirsty, hesitantly ask for water. The man at the well pulls the rope up and there comes a bucket full of Coca-Cola, *the real thing*. This television advertisement with Bollywood star Amirkhan playing the role of the villager marks a new strategic phase of soft drink industry in India and in other third world nations. This shows how soft drinks have grown in their audacity to replace common drinking water.

The Carbonated soft drinks have made it to the world's third most consumed beverage. In many countries, the fizzy drinks have successfully replaced milk and fruit juices from the diet of millions of people. Studies confirm that Americans take soft drinks than any other liquid, including tap water. Ironically, these drinks are marketed as alternatives to drinking water even in areas where water itself is a luxury. Statistics show that the consumption of soft drinks is growing at a 5% rate globally.

A couple of Multinational players who reap huge profits from both soft drink and bottled water sales control the global soft drink industry. The products of Coca-Cola and Pepsi cola carve up majority of the world market. Their presence in the market since the last decades of the nineteenth century has seasoned them to adapt to the changing world scene and to harvest maximum returns. They became proponents and benefactors of the neo-liberal economic policies sponsored by the forces of global dominance, of which they too have their own representation. These companies have gained

clout over national governments and grown in their capacity to exert political and financial power in many countries. They have control over the market in more than 200 countries worldwide. Even United Nations cannot boast of such a wide and varied representation. Nations other than America fill more than half of the treasury of these American cola giants, and they are expanding rapidly in the third world market. The emerging water market has made them even thirstier to gain control over the whole water sector.

Soft drink is uniquely an American industry, with Coca-Cola, based in Atlanta and Pepsi, in New York dominating the whole market. Coca-cola, the world's largest soft drink, grew with America; spread its network as Uncle Sam explored new territories of power. The sleek bottles of the carbonated drinks virtually introduced America in the villages of the third world. Like McDonald and McCarthy, the coke had its way in the true American style- the style that made the superpower and Coca-cola. The feminine bottles of coke have America in its essence and arrogance in its presence.

The story of soft drinks is a paradox of history that begins with an effort to copy the natural mineral fountains and ends in relegating pure water from our diets. It is said that the ideation of a soft drink dates back to Hippocrates, the Father of medicine. He is said to have in mind that the waters of the naturals springs and those bubbling with the presence of minerals has some medicinal properties and can bring body back to its ease. The Greeks and Romans used the effervescent mineral water fountains for bathing, just for a fun bath and for an occasional medicinal bathe.

The first attempts to make carbonated soft drinks were the result of a desire to duplicate the naturally effervescent, mineral-rich waters that flowed from the springs at European spas. Early experimenters believed that the effervescence was a source of the reputed healthful properties of the waters, and they therefore concentrated on the gaseous nature of the waters.

By the late 1700s, numerous reports of such experiments and investigations were published in the *Philosophical Transactions* journal of the Royal Society of London. Among the authors was Joseph Priestley, who received the society's Copley Medal for his reports on "fixed air" (carbon dioxide) and the mixture of waters with it. Joseph Priestley is nicknamed "the father of the soft drinks industry" for his experiments on gas obtained from the fermenting vats of a

brewery. In 1772 he demonstrated a small carbonating apparatus and suggested that, with the aid of a pump, water might be more highly impregnated with fixed air. Antoine Lavoisier in Paris made the same suggestion in 1773.

Scientists throughout Europe and the United States engaged in experiments to produce carbonation. In 1775, John Mervin Nooth described a special apparatus for preparing small quantities of effervescent waters. Many other devices followed; in the years 1789–1821, factories and bottling plants opened in cities throughout Europe. In the United States, bottled soda water was available as early as 1807.

This is the how the official history by the national soft drink association (America) goes. And this is the other side of history, perhaps, or the history that is being concocted for global consumption. As this narration go by, we will be duly introduced to Coca-Cola and Pepsi, as having the same legacy of therapeutic value and we will be certainly told that these deceptive names like Diet coke and Diet Pepsi are Mineral drinks having great capacity to refresh our body! But, read on and have the authentic taste or rather the taste of history* sponsored and tailored.

Soft drinks presented a new non-alcoholic option and a new culture- a culture that evolved with industrialisation and spread in tandem with the gallop of the new imperialistic advances. Thus, the history of soft drinks and especially that of coke and Pepsi has so many nuances and they have so much to share with that of America and globalisation of economy and market. In fact, it is the story of changing strategies, loyalties and targets with history, the great capacity to be flexible – and it is how history is tactfully being taken hostage.

It is the history of America. And the history of soft drinks goes hand in hand.

The discovery of natural springs in New York was followed by legends and myths about the earth's mysterious waters, believed to be cures for everything from arthritis to indigestion. This fascinated physicians and scientists who began learning the tiny bubbles fizzing from these waters. In due course, scientists understood that the air released from these springs is carbon dioxide. It took no time to produce carbonated water artificially in the laboratory. Moreover,

laboratories began research on further improvements. The probability of a miracle cure drink seemed very near.

By the 1830's, both artificial and natural mineral waters were considered healthy and refreshing drinks in America. However, believing they could improve upon curative properties, the Alchemists of mineral drink began their ardent pursuit. There began a race, and the mirage of a magic cure trapped many. They experimented with a multitude of ingredients from birch bark to dandelions. And while no miracle cures developed, some new flavours and tastes were discovered. Ginger ale, root beer, sarsaparilla, lemon and strawberry were among the most popular of the early flavours. The American culture of soft drinks was soon inaugurated and it spread like anything.

In the early phase, the soft drink industry was a seasonal business, operating primarily during the summer months. Sales were limited by few outlets for the new carbonated beverages, and by the consumer's restricted mobility.

For many years, America's pharmacists were the driving force behind the refinement of soft drinks and many of the flavours and combinations. Their association with chemistry and medicine made them ideally suited for this business. The local pharmacy was the centre attraction in many American towns in the mid-1800's. people gathered around the new soda fountains to have drinks mixed on the spot. The corner drugstore soon grew in popularity, and the soft drink bottling industry took shape.

"Gradually, demand grew for soft drinks to be consumed in the home. Bottling the product proved difficult at first, since pressure from the carbon dioxide forced corks right out of the bottles. Clearly, if soft drinks were ever to be sold for consumption beyond the corner pharmacy, there would have to be a way to keep them corked. Inventors worked for years to develop a solution, patenting some 1,500 different corks, caps and lids for soft drink bottles."- the industry has colourful stories to tell about every stage of soft drink history, beginning from cork to the designing of the bottles. These stories render halo of a legend to the industry.

In 1892, the "crown cap" was invented 'completely revolutionising the soft drink industry by preventing the escape of carbon dioxide from bottled beverages. In fact, it was the dominant soft drink closure for more than 70 years. The crown cap enabled

consumers to take the drinks home. As the home consumption of soft drinks grew, demand at the corner drug store dwindled. Many pharmacists, realizing the promising future of soft drinks, abandoned their trade to become full-time bottlers. Others began stocking soft drinks in their stores. Horse drawn wagons travelled America's streets, loaded with brand-name soft drinks and headed for growing retail outlets.

Automobiles ushered in a new era for the soft drink industry. Roadside stands appeared across the United States and large motorized delivery trucks catered better to America's growing demand for liquid refreshment.

Automatic vending machines appeared in the 1920's, once again changing the business of soft drinks. Vending machines and fountain dispeers led the way to the expansion of soft drinks to industrial outlets. Soft drinks began to follow Americans at home or at work, making them addictive to the coloured drinks.

The soft drink industry changed in to a national industry in America from the local pharmacies. The industrial boom changed the whole scenario, in favour of soft drink manufacturers. Bottling plants were set up in different parts of United States. But until the 1890's, the industry primarily depended on manual operations. Glass bottles were blown individually, while filling, sealing, mixing, and packaging were done manually. With the advent of the new century, automated machinery was developed, making the soft drink industry more efficient and productive. The number of plants bottling soft drinks in America increased from 1,377 to 4,916, as mass production and countrywide marketing gave a fillip to the industry. The demand for soft drinks kept growing.

New, modern machinery turned out uniform products and radically improved the production. By the time The Great Depression, hit, carbonated beverages already were established as part of the American way of life. The Depression led the way to the creation of innovative new soft drink brands and containers, which continued in the next two decades. Responding to consumer demand, the industry rolled out soft drinks in cans and introduced diet beverages.

This history narrated by the National Soft Drinks Association lauds the industry for its wartime patriotism and peacetime social activities thus adding sheen to it. It goes like this- "Together, America

and its soft drink industry suffered hardships caused by World War II. Shortages of cork, sugar and steel significantly affected the manufacturing process, but soft drinks continued to be available to the public. *The soft drink industry participated in scrap metal collection drives and made significant efforts to conserve natural resources in order to support the war effort.* Soft drinks were classified as “essential to lift the morale of US soldiers” by the U.S. War Department and both the soft drink industry and federal government made every effort to provide troops with products. When unable to ship soft drinks directly to the soldiers, the government sent machinery and materials so they could be made on the spot. “Soft drink companies have kept pace with the nation’s endless thirst for refreshment. While many things have changed throughout the years, soft drinks continue to be America’s beverage of choice. Soft drinks are a good part of America.”

Yes, the soft drinks are a good part of America. The flesh and blood of America! Definitely, the coke and pep are the brand ambassadors of American culture, the token of America stuck on your belly and tattooed in your brains.

Truly American, truly *benevolent*

WE are told:

“From soda water in 1700s, soft drinks have emerged as America’s favourite refreshment: more popular than coffee, tea and juice combined. And they have dominated the world as well. In fact, one of every four beverages consumed in America today is a soft drink, averaging out to over 56 gallons of soft drinks per year for every man, woman and child. As soft drinks have grown in popularity they have become much more than the country’s favourite beverage; they have contributed to the growth and prosperity of America.

The idolising efforts go even farther:

“During World War II, bottlers throughout the nation donated time, work force and equipment to support the war effort. Their work resulted in the collection of more than 50 million pounds of scrap metal for manufacturing into armaments. The industry set an example for the nation in conserving precious resources by drastically changing delivery methods to save millions of gallons of crucial fuel supplies.” says the NSDA.

This history would teach us about the soft drink industry's stringent measures to conserve precious resources and would keep mum on the use of enormous non-degradable plastic by the industry. The story will keep a studied silence on the industry's indifference to the demands to reuse plastic bottles.

The American soft drink industry (read Coca-cola) claims to be patriotic and recount stories of its suffering along with America in World War2. But on the ground, the company was ready to share a drink with *der fuehrer*. Several facts are blinded when the Great American Soft drinks claim to be patriotic. In fact, World War helped America to win new areas of domination and coke expanded alongside. And the soft drink giant had to suffer the pangs of cold war as the communist bloc closed the doors before it. Moreover, the Socialist policies targeted the Yankee attempts of domination as well as coca-cola, as in India when the Janatha government showed the door for them in 1979.

"And during World War II and all subsequent conflicts, the soft drink industry donated its products to American troops serving on the front lines. Supporting America's interests is a tradition that continues for the soft drink industry," says official website of American Soft drinks. *And it adds:*

"Soft drink companies give back to their communities in peacetime, too. The industry is a world leader in actively promoting recycling and conservation, fostering teenage drug awareness programs, supporting anti-drunk driving efforts, funding school programs, providing safe water to people in natural disaster areas through use of their water treatment systems, and organizing events to protect and improve the lives of all Americans. The soft drink industry recognizes its responsibilities to America and welcomes the opportunity to meet them.

Soft drinks are much more than America's favourite refreshment. They are a good part of America."

It must be true. The American soft drinks give back to their communities in sheer abundance! That is why the black employees where forced to file an anti- racial suit against Coca-Cola. The industry funds schools and in turn put soft drink vending machines in school campuses and the American parents are a worried lot as this 'liquid candy' machines 'give back' over sugared kids with weakened bones.

The soft drink industry *gives back* to the local communities in India and Columbia in a totally different flavour. To the workers community in the Columbian bottling plant of Coca-Cola, the bottler gives back union leaders stuffed in coffins. And the tribal communities of Plachimada, in the southern state of Kerala in India have a totally different story to tell about the “giving back.” The American soft drink giant, Coca-Cola churns out the last drop of water from their land and gives back toxic sludge as fertiliser to the villagers.

Origin of Soft drinks

The first marketed soft drinks (non-carbonated) appeared in the 17th century. They were made from water and lemon juice sweetened with honey. In 1676, the Compagnie de Limonadiers of Paris was given a monopoly for the sale of lemonade soft drinks. Vendors would carry tanks of lemonade on their backs and distribute cups of the soft drink.

In 1767, an Englishmen, Dr. Joseph Priestley, produced the first drinkable manmade glass of carbonated water. Three years later, the Swedish chemist Torbern Bergman invented a generating apparatus that made carbonated water from chalk by the use of sulphuric acid. Bergman’s apparatus allowed imitation mineral water to be produced in large amounts.

In 1810, the first U.S. patent was issued for the “means of mass manufacture of imitation mineral waters” to Simons and Rundell of Charleston, South Carolina. In 1832, John Mathews invented an apparatus for the making carbonated water. John Mathews mass manufactured his apparatus for sale. Over 1,500 U.S. patents were filed for a cork, cap or lid for the carbonated drink bottle tops. The bottles were under a lot of pressure from the gas. Inventors were trying to find the best way to prevent the carbon dioxide (bubbles) from escaping. In 1892, William Painter, a Baltimore machine shop operator, patented the “Crown Cork Bottle Seal”. It was the first very successful method of keeping the bubbles in the bottle.

In 1899, the first patent was issued for a glass-blowing machine for the automatic production of glass bottles. Earlier glass bottles had all been hand-blown. Four years later, the new bottle-blowing

machine was in operation.

The soft drinks have grown globally introducing the effervescent drinks to different cultures and continents. Large-scale advertisements and promotional drives made them favourite drink, replacing the traditional local drinks. Now the Per capita annual consumption of carbonated soft drinks is nearly four times the per capita consumption of fruit beverages. In 2001, global per capita consumption was around 67.5 litres per year.

North America is the largest soft drinks market with 27 per cent of total world soft drink sales and an annual per capita consumption of 192 litres. The European market accounts for 21 per cent, with a per capita consumption of 50.8 litres a year. The fastest growth in soft drink consumption is in Asia and South America. Carbonated drinks are the biggest soft drinks sector with 45% of global volume. The five fastest growing soft drink markets between 1996 and 2001 were from Asia, East Europe and the Middle East. The five fastest developing markets during 2001 and 2006 are all expected to come from Asia. Amongst them Pakistan is predicted to have the highest percentage growth rate while India is expected to make sizeable volume gains, as affluence spreads to more of its vast population. Indonesia, China and Vietnam complete the top five for future growth. The overall market should hit 523,000 million litres by 2006.* (CSE Report.)

1. www.nsda.org.

GLOBALISATION'S REAL THING

History of Coca cola's is the history of globalisation bottled, carbonated and added with synthetic flavours. Coke and Pepsi are symbols of globalisation, the most visible and the most shouted at. When the US troops paraded into the heart of Iraq and the mighty Yankee boots crushed the will and well being of Iraqis, Coca-Cola came under attack from the anti-war and anti- American protesters all over the world as the most provoking symbol of Americanisation.

But the struggles against coke are not just symbolic as that. When the tribal people of Plachimada village in the southernmost part of India come up against Coca-Cola plant in their land, they had nothing to do with any of these anti-globalisation symbolisms. Their demand was just to drive away the giant multinational from exploiting the natural resources of their land. They are still struggling for their right to their natural resources and for their basic right to live. Here Coca-Cola becomes a violator of human rights and a corporate juggernaut that strangles the poor tribals' lives and a name that is synonymous to death.

The 117-year history of Coca-Cola registers a steady growth from a local American beverage to a Multinational giant that prey on the indigenous economies and markets. The whole story begins from an accidental invention of a new beverage in an Atlanta pharmacy. In May 1886, the three legged brass kettle in the backyard lab of Dr John Pemberton bubbled with a new concoction. Pemberton, Atlanta based pharmacist, who was in search of a magic cure, but finally reached a different formula, which was named Coca-Cola by his bookkeeper. The official history of Coca-Cola honours the

bookkeeper, Frank Robinson as the man who penned the famous logo of Coca-Cola, which is still in use. It is said that Pemberton accidentally discovered the drink as Columbus reached America. Just as Columbus couldn't reach his destination, Pemberton never made the magic cure he searched for. Just like America that resumed the colonisation drive from where Columbus stopped, Coca-Cola began its race for global domination, eating up native drinks and cultures of territories.

For the first nineteen years, the Coca-Cola was marketed as a tonic and contained extracts of cocaine and the caffeine rich Kola nut. The company claims that now the drink is cocaine free. However, at the same time the secret recipe is still unknown to the world. It is called the best-publicized secret as many assumptions have come out as thoroughly investigated facts. Nevertheless, the company hold that they have the right to keep the secret. And the consumers are totally unaware of what they are having for years.

The soft drink was first sold to the public at the soda fountain in Jacob's Pharmacy on May 8, 1886. The drink was sold for 5 cents per glass. About nine servings of the soft drink were sold each day. People consumed the caramel coloured ingredients, the syrup made of coca leaves and cola nuts as a rejuvenating drug. Some time later carbonated water was added to the syrup.

The Coca-Cola historians give a detailed dateline of how the drink attained the present stature and how it became a giant corporate and a big player in the global market representing both American culture and economy.

Dr. Pemberton sold Coca-Cola out of the pharmacy he worked at. In 1886 Pemberton became sick he sold some portions of his interest to Asa G. Candler. In 1888 Pemberton died, and Asa Candler a Druggist and businessman, began buying all the outstanding shares of Coca-Cola. He then had complete control by 1891 for \$2,300. In 1892, Candler and his brother John Candler, Frank Robinson and two other associates formed "Coca-Cola Company" in Georgia.

By the late 1890s, Coca-Cola was one of America's most popular fountain drinks. With Asa Griggs Candler, at the helm, the Coca-Cola Company increased syrup sales by over 4000% between 1890 and 1900. Advertising was an important factor in Pemberton and Chandler's success and by the turn of the century, the drink was sold across the United States and Canada. Around the same time,

the company began selling syrup to independent bottling companies licensed to sell the drink.

“In 1894, the company opened its first syrup manufacturing plant outside Atlanta in

Dallas Texas. The following year plants opened in Chicago and Los Angeles. Three years after the Coca-Cola Company's incorporation Candler announced in the annual report: “Coca-Cola is now drunk in every state and territory in the United States”. Joseph A. Biedenharn, of Vicksburg, Mississippi installed bottler machinery in his candy store in 1894 and became the first Coca-Cola bottler in the United States. Benjamin F. Thomas and Joseph B. Whitehead of Chattanooga, Tennessee bought Coca-Cola from Asa Candler for one dollar. He got all right to Coca-Cola and opened the first bottling plant in Chattanooga that year.

International distribution for Coca-Cola began when they decided to launch Coke to Canada and Mexico in 1898. Within that same period, Coca-Cola expanded across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe. The man responsible for this was Charles Howard Candler, the oldest son of Asa Candler. Charles brought with him a gallon of the secret syrup and sold it to an American owner of a London soda fountain. In 1906, the international bottling and distributing plants were established in Panama and Cuba. Then in 1926, Coca-Cola's international distribution began to expand even more with the help of Earnest Woodruff. He worked with his associates and Coca-Cola on organizing international expansion by creating a Foreign Department. In 1930, the Foreign Department became a subsidiary called The Coca-Cola Export Corporation distributing in only a few European countries and Canada. By 1940, Coca-Cola's sales began to increase with the expansion of bottlers in forty-five countries. Candler sold the Coca-Cola Company in 1919 for \$25 million to an Atlanta banker Ernest Woodruff. In 1923, Woodruff's son Robert Woodruff was elected president of Coca-Cola Company.

By the time Pepsi cola, another American soft drink brand, emerged as a strong market rival. The market battle forced both soft drinks to fight for ‘more of a share that goes in to the people's stomach’. Billions were spent on advertisements and sales promotion drives Diversification of product range followed suit. The post-World War II years saw diversification in the packaging of Coca-Cola and

also in the development or acquisition of new products. In 1946 the company purchased rights to the Fanta soft drink, previously developed in Germany. It introduced the lemon-lime drink 'Sprite' in 1961 and the sugar-free Cola Tab in 1963.

By purchase of Minute Maid Corporation in 1960, it entered the citrus beverage market. The company later acquired Duncan foods, a coffee producer, and formed the Coca-Cola company foods Division in 1967, now known as the Minute Maid Company". From 1977-1983 the company produced and marketed wine in the United States. In 1982 Coca-Cola bought Belmont Spring Water Company Incorporated. (Coca-Cola sold Belmont Springs in 1989.) In 1982 the company acquired a controlling interest in Columbia Pictures, a motion picture and entertainment company, but sold its interest to Sony Corporation in 1989.

In 1985, Coke changed its original recipe for a "New Coke". As the market shares had fallen, the company thought that the soft drink needed a change. But the consumers rejected this change and the company reverted to the previous recipe. In 1986, it consolidated the U.S. bottling operation it owned into Coca-Cola Enterprises and sold 51% of the new company to the public. The company had entered the burgeoning bottled water business in the 1980s with Bon Aqua and in 90s with Dasani. Coca-Cola hit Indian bottled water market with Kinley in the new millennium.

Internationally Coca-Cola Company distributes 160 beverage varieties including bottled water brands in nearly 200 countries worldwide. It owns 50% of the international soft drink market. About two-thirds of Coca-Cola's sales come from outside North America. 80% of Coca-Cola's operating income was coming from outside the United States by the 1990's. Opening out in to the third world markets marked a new phase in the history of Coca-Cola. More countries adopted open market policies and the local markets became more vulnerable to 'global giants like Coca-Cola. The company changed its strategy to fit indigenous markets and gradually pushed local players to the corner. The structure of the Coca-Cola Company helped it to play safe in the global market.

Coca-Cola Company is divided into four international geographic operating units and one national operating unit in the US. The four international geographic operating groups are: *The Greater Europe Group, the Latin America Group, the Middle and Far East Group, and*

the Africa Group. The Greater Europe Group operates in Western Europe with a growing market in the eastern parts of Europe. The Latin America Group covers from Tijuana, Mexico, in the north to Tierra del Fuego in the south, which also includes operations in Central and South America.

The Middle and Far East Group operates in the most populated areas of the world. This group manages the countries of the Pacific and Middle East. These countries consist of Japan, Australia, China and India. The African Group, which operates in the countries that make up the sub-Saharan Africa. Japan, Argentina, Denmark, France, Belgium and China are six of Coca-Cola's major distribution countries. India is emerging as a big market of Coca-Cola and in Japan it has already established leadership. Coke waged another 'Vietnam war' in order to usurp market from the local players in the country of Viet Cong.

The poor nations of Latin America and Africa became key coke areas with thoroughly established markets and bottling networks. In 1942, Coca-Cola production began in Argentina. Sales in Argentina climbed up to 300,000 cases by the end of 1943. Coca-Cola de Argentina S.A. currently sells approximately 1,000 times more beverages annually than that historic year when it all started in 1942. In Africa, Coca-Cola has huge stakes and it is the largest private sector employer.

In the 1930's Coca-Cola was imported into Denmark. About 5.2 million Danes consume an estimated forty-percent of Coca-Cola products. Coca-Cola came to France in 1933. Making its first appearance at the "Café de l'Europe" in Paris. Coca-Cola has been the number one beverage in France since 1966. The French consumers currently drink roughly 88 servings of Coca-Cola products annually.

In 1927, Belgium was introduced to Coca-Cola. It was one of the top 20 countries in terms of consumption when Belgian Health Minister, Luc Van den Bossche, urged Belgians not to drink Coca-Cola or other Coca-Cola brands such as Fanta, Sprite, Aquarius and Bonaqua in 1999 June. This was preceded by the dangerous toxic contamination and hospitalisation of 100 people. The French and Luxemburg governments followed suit and banned Coke products. The company was forced to recall about 14 million cases. This was the largest product recall in history of Coca-Cola. It was

said that bacteria from the wooden pallets got onto the cases of Coke. Then the people who drank the soda ingested the E. coli bacteria and got sick. There also had been reports of E. coli bacteria contamination in Poland also. The claims of high standards of quality by the company were challenged and people all over the world refused to swallow Coca-Cola's assurances.

Pepsi comes

Close on heels of Coca-Cola, came Pepsi, almost imitating the predecessor. Both had global designs and pursued their plans vigorously making them market rivals in the domestic as well as global competitors. But together they served to change food habits and they both benefited by the widening acceptance of the American food habits. They introduced the culture of soft drinks in more than 200 countries worldwide and made the people "drink the advertisements."

Just like Coca-Cola, Pepsi had its origin in the laboratory of another magic cure seeker. Caleb D. Bradham, a pharmacist in New Bern, North Carolina, formulated the first Pepsi-Cola in 1898. Bradham had also been experimenting with extracts of coco leaves, kola nuts and sugar in his pharmacy since 1893. The beverage based upon an extract of the cola nut was first named "Brad's Drink", but by August 28, 1898 he christened the new drink "Pepsi-Cola" aiming at the new market opened up by Coca-Cola. Pepsi Cola had an additional claim that it would cure Dyspepsia (indigestion). In 1902 Bradham incorporated the Pepsi-Cola Company. This added to the rapid expansion in sales. By 1910 Bradham had franchised more than 300 bottlers in twenty-four American states to produce the drink.

Wars gave the gravest blow to Pepsi cola. And as a result the company fell on hard times after World War I went into bankruptcy in 1922. In 1920s Pepsi was reorganized and reincorporated several times. A Wall Street broker, Roy C. Megareel came to the rescue of the company. He controlled it until 1931, when the company again went bankrupt. This time Charles Guth, the president of a candy company, took the role of the savior. In 1931 Guth, the real founder of modern Pepsi-Cola picked up the company's trademark and assets. He established a new Pepsi-Cola Company, had a chemist formulate a better drink, and began merchandising a hugely

successful 12-ounce bottle for five cents. The business reached new heights as by 1934 Pepsi-Cola turned the corner and began purchasing bottling operations throughout the United States. The company was gaining steady earnings and was gaining a foothold in the industry when the Second World War gave the fatal blow. Sugar rationing was imposed in the US in 1942 badly affecting the whole industry. While the coke managed to gain contracts from the government, Pepsi had to restrict its production.

Guth was also president of Loft, Incorporated, a candy manufacturer and soda-fountain chain. In legal battles in 1936–39 Charles Guth lost control of the Pepsi-Cola Company to the new management of Loft, which won ownership of Pepsi-Cola. When in 1941 the Pepsi-Cola Company was merged into Loft, the name Loft, Incorporated, was changed to Pepsi-Cola Company.

After the war, the sugar restrictions were removed. By then coca-cola had widened its network throughout the world and Pepsi had a hard time competing with it. In 1950 Alfred N. Steele, a former vice president of Coca-Cola Company, became chief executive officer. His stress on massive advertising campaigns and sales promotions increased Pepsi-Cola's net earnings 11-fold during the 1950s and made it the chief competitor of Coca-Cola. Throughout the 1950s Pepsi continued to expand aggressively abroad, particularly into Latin America and Europe. During the 1960s Pepsi introduced several new products, including Mountain Dew and Diet Pepsi. In 1965 Pepsi bought the Frito-Lay Company and renamed the new corporation PepsiCo. Subsequently, PepsiCo acquired several fast-food chains, including Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, and KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken). All of these establishments sell Pepsi-Cola.

In 1970 PepsiCo sales passed the \$1 billion mark. In 1974 the company crossed the \$2 billion mark in sales. In 1994, Pepsi-Cola introduced its bottled water brand Aquafina bottled water into test market. During Nixon's presidency, it became the first foreign consumer product to be produced, marketed and sold in the former Soviet Union. In 1995, PepsiCo sales reached \$30.4 billion.

THE HISTORY OF COCA-COLA

- * On May 8, 1886, Atlanta druggist Dr. John Styth Pemberton invented "Coca-Cola" syrup using melted sugar, water and other ingredients. It was marketed as a "brain and nerve tonic" in

drugstores.

- * The original formula included extracts of the African kola nut and coca leaves, both strong stimulants. "Coca-Cola" was one of thousands of exotic patent medicines sold in the 1800's that actually contained traces of cocaine.
- * In 1894, Joseph A. Biedenharn, owner of the Biedenharn Candy Company in Vicksburg, Mississippi, first bottled "Coca-Cola."
- * By 1903, the use of cocaine was controversial and "Coca-Cola" decided to use only "spent coca leaves." It also stopped advertising "Coca-Cola" as a cure for headaches and other ills.
- * In 1919, after his death, Griggs Candler's family sold the interest in "Coca-Cola" to a group of businessmen led by Ernest Woodruff for \$25 million. Woodruff was appointed president of "Coca-Cola" on April 28, 1923 and stayed on the job until 1955.
- * In 1999 Coca-Cola was banned in Belgium, Luxembourg and France after the soft drink was found contaminated.
- * In 2000 coke settled a race discrimination case filed by its Black employees by agreeing to pay more than US\$ 156 million.
- * In 2002 tribal people of Plachimada in the South Indian state of Kerala started their agitation against Coca-Cola's incessant water exploitation. The struggle is still on.
- * In 2003 it was found that the fertiliser, given out to the poor Indian farmers by the Coca-Cola Company was the dangerous toxic sludge from the bottling plant.

COCA-COLA DATES AND SLOGANS

- * 1886 "Drink Coca-Cola"
- * 1904 "Delicious and Refreshing"
- * 1908 "Good to the last drop,"
- * 1922 "Thirst Knows No Season"
- * 1927 "Around the Corner From Anywhere"
- * 1929 "The Pause That Refreshes"
- * 1936 "It's The Refreshing Thing To Do"
- * 1938 "The Best Friend Thirst Ever Had"
- * 1939 "Whoever You Are, Whatever You Do, Wherever You

May Be, When You Think of Refreshment Think of Ice Cold Coca-Cola"

- * 1948 "Where There's Coke There's Hospitality"
- * 1952 "What You Want Is A Coke"
- * 1956 "Coca-Cola - Makes Good Things Taste Better"
- * 1958 "The Cold, Crisp Taste of Coke"
- * 1963 "Things Go Better With Coke"
- * 1970 "It's The Real Thing"
- * 1975 "Look Up America"
- * 1979 "Have a Coke and a Smile"
- * 1982 "Coke Is It!"
- * 1987 "You Can't Beat the Real Thing"
- * 1993 "Always Coca-Cola".

BILLIONS OF GALLONS

July 12, 1944 first-billionth gallon of Coca-Cola syrup manufactured.

April 9, 1953 second-billionth gallon of Coca-Cola syrup manufactured.

May 1959 third-billionth gallon of Coca-Cola syrup manufactured.

June 6, 1963 fourth-billionth gallon of Coca-Cola syrup manufactured.

Mid-1966 fifth-billionth gallon of Coca-Cola syrup manufactured.

January 1969 sixth-billionth gallon of Coca-Cola syrup manufactured.

January 1971 seventh-billionth gallon of Coca-Cola syrup manufactured.

The billion gallon marks then came so frequently the Company ceased to record and celebrate them after the seventh.

TRIVIA

- * If all the "Coca-Cola" ever produced were to erupt at a rate of 15,000 gallons per hour, this geyser would flow continually for

over 1,577 years.

- * "Coca-Cola" is the world's most recognized trademark-recognized by 94% of the world's population.
- * Every second of every day there are approximately 9,600 soft drinks from The Coca-Cola Company consumed. The Company sells nearly half of all the soft drinks consumed around the world.
- * By the 1950's, automobile service stations sold more "Coke" than they did motor oil.
- * One share of Coca-Cola Company stock, initially bought for \$40, is now worth over \$16,000.
- * In July 1985, "Coca-Cola" became the first soft drink to be enjoyed in outer space on the Space Shuttle Challenger. A special Company-developed space can was used.

According to German newspaper Bild, the secret recipe of Coca-Cola has been solved. The beverage appears to consist of 99.5% of coke water, the secret itself containing in the remaining 0.5%. The Germans Udo Pollmer and Susanne Warmut have written a book on the subject, according to which the remaining 0.5% contains cola leaves, vanilla, coffee and cacao concentrate, lemon juice, tangerine peel liqueur, a drop of tropical oil, and a mimosa tree extract. The recipe of Coca-Cola has so far been regarded as the most carefully protected secret in the world. It is known to be kept in a safe in USA.. (www.pravda.ru. 2000-10-24)

COCA LEAVES

(*Erythroxylumcoca*)

The word coca in Coca-Cola comes from a tropical shrub of the same name, the leaves of which are the source of the drug cocaine.

The plant, cultivated in Africa, northern South America, Southeast Asia, and Taiwan, grows about 2.4 m (8 feet) tall. The plants thrive best in hot, damp situations, such as the clearings of forests; but the leaves most preferred are obtained in drier localities, on the sides of hills. The leaves are considered ready for plucking when they break on being bent. The green leaves are spread in thin layers and dried in the sun; they are then packed in sacks, which, in order to preserve the quality, must be kept from damp.

The composition of different specimens of coca leaves is very

inconstant. Good samples have a strong tea like odour; when chewed they produce a sense of warmth in the mouth and have a pleasant, pungent taste. Coca leaves and preparations of them have physiologically no external action. Internally their physiological action is similar to that of opium.

COLA

Genus of tropical trees of the chocolate family (Sterculiaceae, order Malvales) that bear fruits enclosing large kola, or cola, nuts containing caffeine, tannin, and theobromine. Though native to Africa, two species especially, *Cola acuminata* and *C. nitida* are grown commercially in various tropical regions around the world, the dried kola nuts being used in manufacturing the popular soft drink called cola. The cola drink consists of flavouring extracts of kola nut, spice oils, and other aromatics (and sometimes of coca leaves); caramel colouring; sugar and other sweeteners, singly or in combination; phosphoric acid or citric acid; carbon dioxide for effervescence; and water (86 to 92 percent by volume). In diet cola drinks, artificial flavourings and sweeteners predominate, and the water content may near 100 percent.

COLA'S NAZI LINKS

Coca-Cola exemplifies the chameleon nature of Multinational corporations in full spirit. In pursuit of profit and market dominance, they would stoop to any low and would support any oppressive regime. They have no reservations in compromising national interests and ethics. If a third world country offered cheap labour, they would throng the place with heavy investment packages and would continue to boast of their high standards of production. They would play loyal and patriot corporate citizens in one place and assume the local political colour in other nations, even if it went against national interests.

In the essay, *Coca Cola Goes to War*, Eleanor Jones and Florian Ritzmann,¹ explores the global giants' despicable links with Nazi oppressive regime while the company poised itself as a flag-waver of American patriotism in United States. In early 1945, when a group of German prisoners of war landed in New Jersey, they were excited to find a large Coca-Cola signboard. "We are surprised that you have Coca-Cola here too": they told the American guards.

This anecdote clearly portrays the popularity of Coca-Cola in those early years of its international expansion. The Nazi soldiers had in mind the successful ad campaign of coke - "was ist Coca-Cola" and Coca-Cola eiskalt. These ad campaigns together with close Nazi links of the company had created an image of coke as a truly Nazi drink in the minds of Germans at large. Therefore, this incident of Nazi excitement, in a way shows the marketing success Coca-Cola obtained in the early decades of last century. This instance also sheds light on the nefarious idealism of the soft drink giant.

This is an indication in to what extend these multinationals would go to gain their point. The Coca-Cola Company boasts of having marched with the US army and suffered the pains of war just as America did. But behind the doors, they were trading with the Nazis. And see how this truly American drink seem truly German to the Nazi soldiers!

History stands witness to the fact that Coca-Cola had no scruples in associating with swastika bearers while they whipped up patriotic sentiments in the US to boost sales during the wartime depression. Coca-Cola acquired a national warrior status as they got the exclusive orders to serve the US army. At the same time, they were playing another game in the furers' land.

When Coca-Cola had their drink sweetened with patriotic zeal and self-assumed the status of "Universal Symbol of the American way of Life," German Coca-Cola men had been busy quenching the thirst of the Third Reich and its conquered territories. Coca-Cola tried to impress the Nazi Supremos in order to sustain in Germany, bribed and cajoled the German leaders into act in favour of the company. In turn the Nazi's winked at the American lineage of the cola company even in their heydays. The swastika and Coca-Cola logo sat comfortably together in Nazi Germany. The American company closely collaborated with the Nazi reign.

Coca-Cola entered the politically turbulent and strongly anti-American Germany in 1929. Then the world was beginning to feel the heat of economic depression. That was a very bad time and atmosphere to launch a new American product in Germany. Still Coca-Cola dared to take the lead. Moreover, when the Nazis under Hitler came in to power, the company struggled hard to bemuse the Nazis.

The essay traces many resemblances in the basic philosophy of Hitler and Coca-Cola and says that they both had many things in common. Both were expansionist and envisioned a global empire. Coca-Cola boasted the American way of living (*truly American.*) while the Nazis upheld that only Germans had the true Aryan blood in their veins. Nazis believed mass production and mass consumption as the basis of their world order. Coca-Cola moored its world business ambitions in the centrality and secrecy of its production and decision making apparatus. At the same time, the company always had the world market in mind. It has very meticulous plans to invade new

terrains of world market.

Coke's advertisement catchwords like Universal and American Way of Life were at variance with the Nazis' pursuit of their own 'Universalist' goals. Coke's American links were very clear to the Nazis and still the German coke suffered little under the condescendingly xenophobic Nazi regime. In the ten-year period spanning 1929 and 1939, the company's annual sales shot up to four million cases. Even during the war's late stages, Coca-Cola did not falter; in 1944 when Germany was in a very bad economic and political condition, the company still produced two million cases of bottled beverages in Germany.

Behind this success was a cola-man, Max Keith, who had high access to the Nazi power links. Coke's survival strategy in Germany was very simple: please the Nazis by whatever means. Max Keith was the head of coca-colas German empire that ranked second position in Coke consumption. Keith was a thorough businessman with extensive knowledge about the power corridors in the Nazi empire and the ways to induce the people in power.

Coca-Cola sponsored Nazi events in Germany and gave enormous advertisement support to Nazi publications, while at the same time coke in America was urging people to buy war bonds to help the army oust the Nazis.

"An abundance of examples shows how Coke's advertising supported the Third Reich. Hans Dieter Schaefer reports, for instance, that after the aggressive news broadcast by the Reichsrundfunk, silly advertising jingles propagating the evangelium of refreshment were next. Coke ads deliberately sought the close contact to the men in power. This meant that when the cover of a magazine sported a picture of the Fuehrer, chances were good that a Coke advertisement would grace the back of that cover. Even when visitors streamed into the Sportpalast to listen to one of Dr. Goebbels' infamous speeches, they had to pass by a large billboard urging them to drink 'Coca-Cola eiskalt'"

Coca-Cola was one of the three official beverage sponsors at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, and thus participated in an event the Nazis deliberately exploited to celebrate Germany's return to power and status. Berlin Olympics turned out to be a Nazi stage- show where Hitler displayed his new ideal world order. Athletic competition was a Nazi ideal and the Coca-Cola GmbH cashed in

heavily on this infatuation by becoming one of the biggest sponsors of sports events, most notably the annual National Bicycle Championships and the Soccer Cup.

In 1937, Max Keith succeeded in taking Coca-Cola literally into the heart of Nazism. The occasion was the Reichsausstellung Schaffendes Volk, or Reich "A Working People" Exhibit. In this industrial exhibition reserved to the companies most loyal to the new order, the Coca-Cola GmbH, according to Mark Pendergrast, set up a functioning bottling plant, with a "miniature train carting Kinder beneath it, [. . .] at the very center of the fair, adjacent to the Propaganda Office."

The strategy of direct association with Nazi-leaders or of lending support to events propagandized by Nazi-ideology sent a powerful subliminal message to both consumers and government by signalling that Coca-Cola was on Germany's side.

In the October 1938 issue of the army-magazine, *Die Wehrmacht* printed up to celebrate the invasion of the Sudetenland. In this ad, a hand holds out a Coke bottle in front of a world map underlined by the caption 'Ja, Coca-Cola hat Weltruf' (Yes, Coca-Cola enjoys international reputation). This universalist claim is apparently harmless. But when these words address a nation's armed group armoured with a philosophy of coercion and international domination, the meanings get a sinister undertone. This adds the gravity of the matter as the magazine's inner pages glorified nazi ideals and German aggressions.

By 1939, Coca-Cola had 43 bottling plants and over 600 local distributors in Nazi Germany. In fact, Nazi aggression actually helped to spread Coke around Europe, as bottlers were established in newly conquered areas such as Austria and the Sudetenland. When the war cut off the import of Coca-Cola secret recipe and coca leaves, then Keith handled the difficulty by inventing Fanta locally. Fanta is still in the Coca-Cola carton having a very prominent place in their sales all over the world. By the time war broke out, Coke's situation was so secure that Max Keith could get himself "appointed to the Office of Enemy Property to supervise all soft drink plants, both in Germany and the captured territory. As German troops overran Europe, Keith followed, assisting and taking over the Coca-Cola businesses in Italy, France, Holland, Luxembourg, Belgium and Norway." Some of the forced labourers kidnapped

from the conquered territories were also sent to work for Max Keith's Coca-Cola factory. This proves beyond doubt the close assistance of Coca-Cola with the Nazi state.

In fact, Coca-Cola was fighting for both sides. Coke, the official soft drink of the army of US, vehemently stood for patriotism and American way of life while they were collaborating with the Nazis in order not to let their business go down. This was the case with many other big US corporatists during wartime. They were ready to serve for their enemies too. Sales, growth mattered, and nothing else. Effective public relations could keep the image of the companies and put many historical facts under the carpet.

This policy of opportunism is the best-kept secret formula of Coca-Cola and other multinationals. The secret ingredient of transnational success lies in this simple truth. These multinational soft drinks companies are ready to prepare any bloody concoction to win their case.

Coke and American patriotism

The Second World War proved beneficial to the cola company. When the other companies suffered under financial rumbles, coke emerged unscathed. During the war, Coca-Cola dramatically expanded its international operations. As American military moved throughout the world, Coca-Cola went with them. Coke established bottling plants behind the lines as American forces moved into France, Germany, Japan, Brazil, India, the Philippines, Australia and the United Kingdom.

The war- imposed rationing in the country, took a heavy toll on the soft drink industry in the United States. The major soft drink rival of coke, the Pepsi cola had to stop its production, as they could not survive stringent sugar rationing. When the war began, The Coca-Cola Company's use of sugar in the manufacturing of syrup for civilian consumption was restricted to 50% of its pre-war average. However, Coca- cola managed the adverse situation turn positive for them.

By 1919, coca-cola had become the world's largest consumer of granulated sugar and the rationing of sugar had almost shattered the company. So, it prepared in advance for a possible involvement of America in the ww- I I. Ben Oehelert, who lobbied for the company

in Washington, began exercises to convince the US government that Coca-Cola is essential to the war efforts. Approaching Ralph Hayes, secretary and treasurer of the company, Oehlert presented the idea that even in wartime, men and women benefited from regular pauses in their workday. (remember the famous coke ad “the pause that refreshes.”)

Hayes referred to the project as “Oehlert’s Folly.” However, on second thought, he must have had the whiff of a tremendous opportunity for growth. As an alternative to alcoholic beverages, Coca-Cola would be a more desirable beverage for a commanding officer to give his troops, he thought. Hayes left no time to arrange for collecting endorsements in favour of Coca-Cola from commanding officers around the country in training camps.

The US War Department agreed with Woodruff’s idea that Coca-Cola would provide a boost in morale. Therefore, they had the U. S. government fund the installation of sixty-four bottling plants behind Allied lines. Entire bottling plants were shipped to the front lines with other supplies. And as soon as the battlefield moved, so would the bottling company. When America went to war, Coca-Cola followed.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December 1941, when the country was bubbling with patriotism, Coca-Cola declared its wartime policy: “We will see that every man in uniform gets a bottle of Coca-Cola for five cents wherever he is and whatever it costs.” thus, Coca-Cola rose to the occasion and declared its dedication to the nation and added the surging patriotism as an ingredient. In 1943, Coca-Cola put out an advertisement urging people to buy U. S. War Bonds and War Stamps and strongly aligned itself with the war effort.

At the outbreak of WWII, Coca-Cola was bottled in 44 countries. At the close of the war, 64 additional bottling plants had been shipped abroad to be as close as possible to combat areas in Europe and the Pacific. In many areas, it gave local people in those countries their first taste of Coke and paved the way for unprecedented worldwide growth for Coca-Cola after the war. Military personnel consumed more than five billion bottles of Coca-Cola during World War II.

Another pause that refreshes: “Coke and Pepsi were also in the news in Iraq lately. Writing from Basra on 1 August, a Washington Post

reporter noted that despite the extreme heat the city's inhabitants had no electricity and no water, thanks to the US/UK bombing of the country's infrastructure. But Iraqis are now free to buy the imported cans of Pepsi Cola piled high in pyramids along the sidewalks.

The US military, however, issued its troops a warning about apparently empty cola cans lying along the road. It said that in some instances they contain bombs and booby traps aimed at patrolling foreign soldiers. As a precaution, US GIs reportedly sometimes shoot such cans before they go by."²

¹ Coca Cola Goes to War, by Eleanor Jones and Florian Ritzmann, www.people.virginia.edu/~tsawyer/coca_col/coke.htm

² Global colas of death, A World to win news services.

Three - 2

GOOD TO THE LAST DROP THE TRUE COLOUR OF A SOFT DRINK

Prologue: "Coca-Cola Company was awarded the Optimas Award for global outlook in success for developing the standardized corporate culture. The award was for maintaining a long-standing commitment to equal opportunity, affirmative action, and valuing the diversity of their consumers. The company's aim to create a working environment free of discrimination and harassment with respect to race, sex, colour, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, disability, being a special disabled veteran. They also have commitment to make reasonable accommodations in the employment of men and women who are qualified with disabilities In addition, to trying to create a working environment free of discrimination and harassment with respect to sex and sexual orientation, to prohibit such discrimination and harassment provide a complaint mechanism to ensure compliance. Even more important, the company maintains an open door policy where employee related issues could be raised freely."

"On 31st August 2002 Adolfo de Jesus Munera Lopez was visiting his mother in Barrio el Bosque in the city of Barranquilla, the city in which he also resided and worked. It was almost 7:00pm as he was approached by two gunmen and shot dead in the doorway of his mother's house.

He had been sacked from his place of work in 1997, because of his trade union work for the food and beverages workers union SINALTRAINAL (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos — the Colombian National Food Industry Workers Union). In the same year, several SINALTRAINAL leaders were imprisoned in Bucaramanga on trumped up terrorism charges:

What did these people have in common? They all were or had been employees at Coca-Cola.”

“On December 5, 1996, an armed group of paramilitary thugs walked into a Coca-Cola bottling plant in Colombia. They shot union negotiator Isidro Gil seven times, killing him. Later that day, another unionist was kidnapped from his home. The paramilitaries returned to the plant with pre-prepared letters of resignation from the union for all the workers. They were told to sign them or suffer the same fate as Gil.”

These are some startling newspaper intros from Columbia. The reports from Columbia expose another face of the corporate giant. The workers in the Colombian coca-cola bottling plants are in fear of paramilitary forces pounding on them at any time. Workers allege that the Coca-Cola bottlers are in contract with paramilitary troops to intimidate the workers and union activists. The multinational corporations take full advantage of the civilian unrest in Columbia and reap their fortune by whatever means even if it meant gross violation of basic human rights. Coca-Cola Columbia is no exception to this. Coca-Cola in Columbia is heavily bent on cheap labour and the rights of the workers are not their concern. Whenever the employees unite, and demand fair deal, the paramilitaries take charge of the situation. And reports of murderous corporate policies beam through the local media. In Mexico, El Salvador and other countries there have also been ample allegations of the company using paramilitary strength to prevent unionising and keep employees in line.

Now, back to the news reports: Union activist Adolfo de Jesus Munera was murdered shortly after he received notice that Colombia’s Constitutional Court accepted a lawsuit filed by him against Coca-Cola. His was only one among the aggressions on union leaders in the coca cola’s Colombian bottling plants.

Management at Coke’s Colombian bottling plants has had a longstanding, relationship with paramilitary groups that have systematically engaged in harassment, kidnapping, torture, and murder of workers who have tried to organize unions demanding better working conditions.

Adolfo de Jesus Munera was a regional leader of the Sinaltrainal food industry workers’ union and a former employee of the Coca-Cola plant Embotelladora Roman in the town of Barranquilla. Before

Munera, seven other union leaders from Coca-Cola plants in Colombia had been murdered abducted and tortured. Moreover, it is reported that the attacks against the union activists are usually accompanied by threats to all Coca-Cola employees to quit their union.

Coca-Cola had a long history of controversy with Adolfo de Jesus Munera. The unionists accuse that In April 1997 the company's plant chief Emilio Hernandez secretly requested the Colombian authorities to take action against Munera accusing him of being a rebel sympathizer. Subsequently, an army unit raided Munera's home and he fled out of town afraid of being targeted by right-wing death squads. The following month he received a letter from Coca-Cola saying that he was dismissed for not showing up at his workplace.

Supported by his union, Munera filed a lawsuit against Coca-Cola demanding to be reinstated in his job. Munera won in the first instance, but rejected at a higher court. Munera, however, appealed and on August 22, 2002, received a letter from the Colombian Constitutional Court saying that his case had been accepted. On August 31st., unknown gunmen where waiting for him outside his mother's house to shoot him dead on the doorsteps. The murder of Munera and other Union leaders have helped the company to throttle union activities.

The paramilitaries keep camped vigil outside the plant to fulfil their mission: to protect corporate interests and preventing trade unions from organising. Paramilitary forces had openly proclaimed that they would kill members of Sinaltrainal for "interfering" in the business of the Coca-Cola's Barranquilla bottling factory.

These paramilitaries get their training and funds from America. In addition, there exists dubious nexus between the CIA and the goons, making the death troops more venal. US-based School of the Americas has long been a training ground for paramilitary death squads throughout Latin America. And one of its purposes is to defend big business by preventing any kind of trade union organisation. Murder and intimidation of trade unionists is not unusual in Colombia. An average of three unionists a week is murdered by paramilitaries, who have proven ties to both the US-backed government and company owners.

The paramilitaries are targeting Sinaltrainal and they are engaged

in systematic annihilation of unionists. Eight prominent members have been murdered by since 1990.

Thirty-eight workers are displaced and 67 are living under death threats. Their families have been threatened and relatives kidnapped. Demonstrations have been attacked and union offices searched, bombed and burned.

Reports say that Panamco, the company that bottles Coca-Cola in Colombia is busy torturing its workers and destroying the union by force. Union members are dismissed unfairly. There are reported cases of forced resignation from the union. In addition, there are instances of the union organisers being arrested and detained, many for more than a year. Many of them were charged for engaging in terrorism. (This is the coca cola way of waging war against terror. And this is how coke's Columbian bottler treats its workers in the plant. When these flagrant violations of human rights and outright rejection of humanness is reported, the cola company washes its hands clean, leaving all the blame on the bottler.)

The unionists and international organisations that stand for the cause of Columbian workers say that the unionists are under constant threat from the paramilitaries who are often present in the factories. Under the surveillance of the paramilitaries, the company replaced experienced workers who had been paid US\$380 a month with people on the minimum wage of \$130 a month. This is the Coca-Cola-way of "developing standardised corporate culture."

The United Steelworkers of America and the International Labour Rights Fund on behalf of SINALTRAINAL filed a suit in U.S. courts in July 2001 against Coca-Cola. The suit maintains that Coca-Cola is responsible for the intimidation and murder of union organizers in its bottling plants in Colombia. In the lawsuit, complainants asserts that the Coca-Cola bottlers "contracted with or other-wise directed paramilitary security forces that utilized extreme violence and murdered, tortured, unlawfully detained or otherwise silenced trade union leaders."

In March 2003, a U.S. district court judge awarded the unions a partial victory. The court ruled that the unions could go ahead with the suit against Panamco, Bebida y Alimentos and Richard Kirby, the cola bottlers in Columbia where the union leaders were murdered. However, they removed Coca-Cola Corp. and Coca-Cola Colombia as defendants in the case. The unions are appealing the decision.

Epilogue: "We vigorously deny any wrongdoing regarding human rights violations in Colombia and are deeply concerned by these allegations against our company... We have been and continue to be assured by our bottlers that behaviour such as that depicted in the claim has in no way been instigated, carried out or condoned by these bottling companies." Pablo Largacha, spokesperson for Coca-Cola de Colombia.

From the coca-cola website:

"Because Colombia is in such turmoil, the Coca-Cola Co. and its local bottling partners have prioritized the safety and security of all employees and labour union officials."

A perfect case of proverbial 'washing hands' and clean corporate eyewash!!

Extract From the lawsuit filed on behalf of Sinaltrainal in the US court. This gives a vivid picture of how the paramilitary goons wipe out union leaders in Coca-Cola bottling plants in Columbia. This part delineates the eyewitness account of the murder of union negotiator Isidro Gil on December 5, 1996.

Minutes after the thugs showed up at the Carepa plant gate, they fired 10 shots at Gil, a member of the union executive board, mortally wounding him. An hour later, another union leader was kidnapped at his home. That evening, a building that housed the union's offices, equipment and records was set ablaze. The next day, a heavily armed group returned to the plant, called the workers together and told them if they did not quit the union by 4 p.m., they, too, would be killed. Resignation forms were prepared in advance by Coca-Cola's plant manager, who had a history of socializing with the paramilitaries and had earlier "given (them) an order to carry out the task of destroying the union," the lawsuit says. Fearing for their lives, union members at Carepa resigned *en masse* and fled the area. The company broke off contract negotiations, the paramilitaries camped outside the plant gate for the next two months, and the union was crushed. Experienced workers who made about \$380 a month were replaced by new hires earning minimum wage (\$130 a month). No charges were ever filed against Gil's killers or those who killed at least seven other who have been murdered. Hundreds of Coke workers have been tortured, kidnapped and/or illegally detained by violent paramilitaries, often working closely with plant managements.

Guatemalan experience

The story of the successful struggle by the workers in a coca-cola franchise in Guatemala gives more historical evidence to the shocking labour relations of the global giant. Coca-Cola workers in Guatemala conducted a struggle in the 1980s, under similar conditions of murder and intimidation to those experienced in Colombia. Guatemalan Coca-Cola workers were organising a union in the local plant demanding fair deal and better working conditions. The coke bottler resorted to similar tactics of intimidation, murder, and dismissals. Eight union members were killed between 1975 and 1980 in Guatemala City after workers formed union at the Coca-Cola plant. However, the workers stood strong on their ground.

The workers refused to budge and the struggle attained more vigour. In a series of three strikes, including a yearlong occupation of the factory, the union was able to win recognition for itself and the international federation of food workers in 1985. The coca-cola company tried to evade responsibility from the crimes against workers claiming that the killings and coercion are the autonomous acts of an independent franchise operation. However, the activities of this “independent” franchiser did not go unnoticed by the world. The workers struggle grew in dimension to become a worldwide labour and human relations issue. Ultimately, the Coca-Cola Company was brought reluctantly into the local labour union struggle by strong international pressure on Coca-Cola operations worldwide exerted by the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF) and its affiliates and internally by churches owning Coca-Cola stock.

COKE'S AIDS ATTACK

Coca-Cola is the largest private sector employer in Africa with more than 100,000 employees. The company has its presence in all African countries except Sudan and Libya. And according to Alexander B. Cummings, President of Coca-Cola Africa Group the company is completely committed to “the future of the African continent, its economy, people, communities and health. We will do all that we can to enable Africans to reach their full potential.” But the HIV AIDS patients in the coke workforce in Africa are sceptical about this statement. They can't afford to subscribe to

these assurances, as they feel cheated by the cola company that hold up its earlier commitments in treating the AIDS affected employees.

Given the enormously increasing sales in African region, activists points out, that the company would have to spare a small share of its revenue from the continent to treat its workers. In 2002, the company earned \$261 million in profit from operations in Africa and \$620 million in net revenue. In 2001 coke registered its highest volume growth in Africa than any other region. Aids activists demand that coke must follow the example of the other companies in Africa that agreed to treat their employees. In August of 2002, following pressure from labor and AIDS groups, the giant mining companies Anglo American, Anglo Gold and De Beers agreed to provide AIDS treatment-including antiretroviral drugs-to their workers. Their just demand Coke should follow the positive example of these companies in providing full health insurance coverage and AIDS treatment.

The Health Global Access Project (GAP), a US based AIDS activist organisation points out that the lack of access to affordable HIV treatment in developing countries, especially access to equitably priced antiretrovirals, has grave consequences. Every day more than 8,000 people in developing countries die of AIDS-related causes because treatment is unaffordable and therefore unavailable to them. These deaths—more than 3 million people each year—are unnecessary. It is the obligation and responsibility of Multi-National Companies to ensure the availability of life-extending treatment for infected workers and their dependents. The organisation further indicates that the MNCs including Coca-Cola are apathetic to their own commitments on the issue.

Succumbing to sustained pressure by the NGOs and its own workers, Coca-Cola announced its commitment to treat its HIV affected work force, in 2001. In June, during the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, Coca-Cola announced efforts in to combat AIDS in Africa in partnership with UNAIDS. Among the marketing and prevention initiatives was a plan to provide or pay for treatment—including antiretroviral—of employees living with HIV/AIDS. As per the plan, 1200-odd “direct workforce” in Africa would be eligible for HIV treatment. This meant leaving a major chunk of its employees to the mercy of the disease. Of the 100,000 workers, coke had only committed on the health care of

the 1,200 direct employees. When pressed by activists and the media to differentiate between the 1,200 direct employees versus 100,000 workers of the Coca-Cola System, Coke representatives agreed to negotiate with its business and bottling partners to provide access to AIDS treatment to the entire Coca-Cola workforce in Africa.

The company announced a 50% cost sharing plan with its African bottlers regarding the treatment of the workers in 2001. The remaining share constitutes 40% contribution by the local bottler and 10% by the employee. It was pointed out that such a cost sharing exercise would only delay the process and is a ploy to elude from responsibility. The company's 'negotiations' with the bottlers on the issue of cost sharing arrangement have failed to deliver. Beginning in April 2002, Health GAP and other treatment activists launched a worldwide campaign against Coca-Cola for its failure to provide a comprehensive workplace HIV/AIDS care and treatment program for its workers in Africa and elsewhere who were employed directly or indirectly by Coke's affiliated bottlers and distributors. After demonstrations in New York, Washington, Atlanta, Boston, and Barcelona in the summer of 2002, Global Day of Action on October 17, 2002 was organised in four continents that increased pressure on Coca-Cola to commit to a comprehensive and sustainable workplace treatment program. As a result of this pressure, Coke announced an initiative to provide antiretroviral therapy to workers and their dependents on September 27, 2002, the Coca-Cola Africa Foundation and Bottlers in Africa HIV/AIDS Healthcare Program. The cola authorities stated that they would spend \$5 million towards treating its African workers. This is against the reported \$621 million sales in 2001 in Africa and an income before taxes amounting to \$258 million.

On March 31, 2003, the company announced that it had reached formal agreement with all of its bottlers to provide treatment to its HIV infected workers. Health activists allege that nothing has occurred on the ground yet. The Health GAP indicates that only 5 of the 40 bottlers have taken steps to treat the workers. The workers and their dependants at the cola bottling plants in Africa are still waiting to get the commitments fulfilled by the cola giants and its bottlers. The agreements and commitments are still fresh on paper as the HIV infected workers continue to suffer.

When cola announced its decision to spare an annual amount

of 5 million, media celebrated the move and coke was named as aligning with the anti AIDS front. Cokes commitments are proving another public relations ploy and as the Health Gap activists put it, the coke is reaping 'unearned praise while workers die; this is corporate complicity and sham compassion at its worst.'

These instances clearly bring to light the flipside of a multinational giant having least regard for people and human values. Coke is only an example of multinational greed. They have no qualms in stooping to any mean level to achieve their goals. They are always on search for territories where environmental laws and working conditions are feeble and where cheap labour is abundantly available.

The corporate disregard for the minorities and downtrodden is evident from their nature of operation. The Multinational oil companies are driving out the indigenous people from their lands in Nigeria and corporate diamond hunt is abetting internal conflicts in Sierra Leone and Uganda. Tribal people in India are fighting against corporate powers to free their land and resources. The global giants have always targeted the local minorities. the history shows that Coca-Cola is not an exception.

To add to the list of corporate callousness, Coca-Cola has a legacy of settling a race suit, filed by black employees against it, for a whopping 156 million US dollars in the year 2000. Coke had to agree to spend another \$36 million on structural programmes within the company. The lawsuit filed on behalf of a class of approximately 2000 African – American employees of Coca-Cola, had alleged that Coke systematically discriminated against African-Americans, paying them lower salaries than whites for the same work, passing them over for promotions and subjecting them to harassment. The plaintiffs argued that black employees are clustered at the bottom of the pay scale averaging \$26,000 a year less than the white workers. The complainants alleged that the discrimination was intentional. The Coca-Cola Company denied these allegations but made it a point to settle the case fearing a public relations setback.

Coke boosts AIDS attack, Scott Leith, *The Atlanta Journal -Constitution* Friday, September 27, 2002

<http://www.treat-your-workers.org>

www.healthgap.org

Four

COKE COMES TO INDIA

Asia is the fastest growing soft drink market in the world with the most populated countries, India and People's Republic of China, opening up its market for multinational giants. Both countries saw a soft drink boom in the beginning of the new millennium. As per its global designs, coca cola had so far been very successful in pushing soft drinks in to the Asian food chain. Soft drinks, having zero nutritional value has become an integral part of the mass food culture that was fashioned and fostered consciously by the industry at large.

The first name in Indian soft drink industry is none other than coca cola. India was introduced to coca cola during Second World War and the American soft drink giant began its Indian operations in 1956. With the end of cold war and with the formation of aggressively globalised market, which kept all its doors opened wide, the American soft drink giants got a free ground to pursue their global goals. They evaded the global market with all their might, guzzled local soft drink companies, and the traditional natural drinks were shifted off to the garret of history.

The Indian market was always unpredictable for coca-cola. Still it played the role of introducing soft drink to India's emerging middleclass. The presence of coke in Indian market remained more or less unchallenged for three decades. After the exit of Pepsi cola from the Indian market as per a cartel arrangement with Coca-Cola in the fifties, there were no foreign soft drink rivals to take head on with the soft drink giant. It continued to cater to the interests of the upper middleclass and the emerging middle strata of Indian cities. Though Coke's operations were limited to these circles, they

had made advances in to the semi urban areas and even to the villages. Its distribution network expanded with a large number of bottlers and franchisees. However, local bottlers of aerated drinks challenged Coca-Cola's dominance in the Indian market. There were quite a few regional brands, but the major one was Parle, with a considerable market in the western and northern regions.

The challenge to coca-cola came not from the market but from the law of the land. The first non-congress government that came to power in New Delhi after the tumultuous days of National Emergency, in 1977 had proclaimed acquaintance with *swadeshi* ideals. The Morarji Desai ministry with George Fernandez as the minister or industry, dealt roughly with the multinationals. Coca-Cola and IBM were given strict instructions either to abide by the law or to pack off.

A close look at the incidents would reveal that rabid socialist idealism of the ministry was not behind the packing off order. The multinationals' arrogant refusal to obey the law of the country was intolerable and unacceptable to the leadership. Even after resuming its operations in the changed economic and political situation, after a long absence in 1993, Coca-Cola have not changed its legacy- the Indian laws remain indigestible for the company. It was a stand off between the ministry of industry and coca-cola over foreign direct investment norms that finally resulted in the former showing the doors for coca cola in 1977. Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) was implemented on the January 1, 1974. The act empowered the Government and the Reserve Bank of India to regulate foreign equity in companies functioning in India. FERA stipulated that foreign companies in low priority areas such as consumer goods should dilute their equity stake in their Indian associates to 40 per cent if they wanted to continue to operate in the country. Coca-Cola came under this category. More than a thousand companies agreed to act in accordance with the FERA directives. But coca-cola remained defiant.

Coca-Cola was directed to continue its operations on condition that its branch would be 'Indianised' with 40 per cent foreign equity. It had to put through dilution within two years. In response to this proposal, Coca-Cola submitted a scheme apparently accepting the FERA directives. The scheme had the typical coca-cola characteristics of deceit and secrecy. The scheme had two parts – the one dealt

with the bottling and distribution. The company expressed willingness to accept the FERA norm of 40 % equity in these areas. The most important part, the secret ingredient of the cola scheme, was that it would hold 100% of the technical or administrative unit and no local participation would be allowed in this crucial section. This was not in conformity with the FERA norms. FERA clearly states that the entire operations of a branch should be brought under one company with 40% foreign equity. The government rejected the scheme proposed by the company and asked to submit a new scheme or leave the country. Coca-Cola found the latter option more comfortable and wound up.

“Coke had 100 percent equity in India. Their investment was not much. They came into the country with 600,000 rupees, which at the present rate of exchange is less than \$20,000. On this 600,000 rupee investment in India, they had taken out of the country, by a modest estimate, 250 million rupees [about \$8 million] as profit in the 20 years they had been in the country.” - Says George Fernandez, the minister of industry who threw coke out of the country in 1977, in an interview appeared in Multinational Monitor.

Coca-Cola Corporation was operating as a branch since 1950s. Though Coca-Cola was in operation since the early 1950s, it was seen that for over two decades it had not declared any profits from its branch in India. As one PAC Report revealed, the company sent annually large remittances to headquarters as share of administrative charges though the branch itself was making losses. Moreover, these remittances were tax deductible! It was also noted that the concentrate had to be imported from Atlanta. The price charged to the Indian unit bore no relationship to the cost of production or the prices charged to other affiliates. The company was obliged to earn import of concentrate through its exports. As Coca-Cola had no products of its own for export, it lifted traditional items such as cashew from third parties and obtained import entitlements in violation of import regulations.

When coke wrapped up and went, it left hundreds of workers penniless. Then the government launched a new public sector soft drink company named 77. Indian soft drink companies had a good time and Parle's brands shot up in the market. The government's strategy was to fill the gap of coca-cola by imitating the American drink. This actually kept the soft drink market alive. The drinks

were alternatives to Coca-Cola and no attempts were made to promote indigenous and traditional natural drinks as alternatives to carbonated soft drinks. There was no dearth of advertisements of the soft drinks for during one and a half decade long absence of coke in India. Therefore, when coke and Pepsi re-entered India after the long gap they saved energy and money on reintroducing “soft drinks” to the Indian consumers.

India's vast and diverse market always lured the multinational soft drinks and junk food industry. After more than 10 years of being reputedly the only non-communist country with no foreign soft-drinks companies, India approved the re-entry of Pepsi-Cola in 1989. Since the exit of Coca-Cola from India, more than 50 Indian soft-drink brands had been developed and 200 production plants set up. The rate of growth in this sector had crossed 10 per cent a year. Moreover, 770 million Indians was irresistible market temptation for cola giants.

Pepsi engaged in a contract with TATA and with Punjab government to produce fruit juice in Punjab. This was dubbed as a positive step that would result in more jobs and economic development in the trouble torn Punjab. Pepsi, Tatas and a Punjab government-owned company joined into a three-way joint venture in which each hold one-third of equity. Pepsi later got 100 percent equity. The Pepsi deal in Punjab was under the garb of helping the farmers of the region. In fact, that was just a ploy to gain a toehold in Indian soft drink industry.

“In 1987 and 1988, rumours started circulating that Coke and Pepsi were trying to get into the country.” George Fernandez remembers the behind-the-scene-stories of the return of the soft drink giants. “In 1988, in my capacity as the general secretary of the Janata Dal, I wrote to the president of Coke in Atlanta and the president of Pepsi in New York. To Coke, I wrote and said, “You remember that I am the one that threw you out, and if you come again, you will be thrown out again, because we are coming back to power.” To Pepsi, I wrote, “I learned that you are coming here. I am the one that threw Coca-Cola out, and we are soon going to come back into the government. If you come into the country, you have to remember that the same fate awaits you as Coca-Cola.”

“The next thing I learned was that the senior executives of both companies were in Delhi, staying at the same hotel. Perhaps they

had hired the same lawyers, and they also immediately established contact with some people in my party. They tried to fix appointments with some of the leaders of the party, to find out to what extent the things I said had meaning. I then got my party to adopt a resolution opposing the entry of Coke and Pepsi into India.

“In 1989 we formed a minority government. In one of the early cabinet meetings of the minority government, I took a position against the entry of Pepsi. There was one other member of the government who had lukewarmly supported me on this. Then one day I found that his support had not just waned, but disappeared, for whatever reason.

Through the six to eight months when the Pepsi entry was being considered in the cabinet, I carried on a very vigorous campaign against it outside. I didn't get any support from my party, except from a small section that had some ideological commitment.

There was a lot of abuse heaped on me, both by the company and people inside the government. The company-managing director here in Delhi issued press statements challenging me, a member of the cabinet, but the government didn't bother to respond. So it was left as though it was some sort of personal fight that I had with Pepsi. One fine day the cabinet cleared the proposal and that was the last word.

I got a message from Pepsi: *For all that, Mr. Fernandez, you succeeded in doing what? It cost us something to get into India then, and it will cost us a little more now.*”

If Pepsi comes, can Coca-Cola be far behind? After a 16-year absence, Coca-Cola returned to India in 1993. Indians had gulped down much soft drink since 1977 and the country witnessed significant changes in the Indian market scene. The whole economic policy changed in favour of multinational companies. India opened up its doors allowing the MNCs a free hand. The FERA had undergone tremendous changes. And coke re-entered Indian scene with a master plan to conquer Indian mind and market.

The Company's presence in India was further cemented in November 1993, as it bought Parle, the top soft drink brand in India for an undisclosed price. (George Fernandez estimates it as around US\$60 million.) Since then, Coca-Cola India has made large investments to build and improve its business.

In the past decade, the Coca-Cola system has invested more than US\$1 billion in India. In 2003, Coca-Cola India disclosed its plans to invest a further US\$100 million in its operations. According to the coke sources, the Coca-Cola Company directly employs approximately 10,000 local people in India. It has 27 wholly owned bottling plants and another 17 franchisee-owned bottling operations. A network of 29 contract-packers also manufactures a range of products for the Company.

Thums Up, Limca, Maaza, Citra and Gold Spot, Coca-Cola, diet Coke, Sprite and Fanta, are the major Coca-Cola products marketed in India. It entered the Indian drinking water business in 2000 with Kinley water. In 2001, Shock and powdered concentrate, Sun fill was introduced. The company estimates the annual per capita consumption of soft drinks in India is much lower than many other third world countries and is getting ready to sweep the market with novel tactics to woo customers. As per the Coca-Cola estimate, the country's per-capita consumption of soft drinks is still a meagre six bottles a year, compared with 15 in Pakistan, 22 in China, and more than 600 in Mexico.

1,3- multinational monitor, august 15,1995

2 Coke's continuing saga of equity, k subramanyan

It takes two to waltz..

Pepsi- coke wars

When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, "let us close our eyes and pray." When we opened them, we had the Bible, and they had the land.
—*Desmond Tutu*

This is how it goes- they come and teach us language. They give books and rifle. And slyly snatch our land, culture and recourses. They teach us to be clean and hygienic. All of a sudden, our natural springs and water from the wells are termed unhealthy. We close our eyes and blindly search for an alternative. When we open our eyes, a beauty would emerge out of the television screen with a soft drink in hand.

The soft drink companies would give us brewed beverages and bottled drinks while they churn out water from our land and leave our soil desiccated. The process of *cola*-nisation follows a well-de-

signed scheme. In the beginning, the campaign was for piped drinking water. We were told that the tap water is better than our well water. Water was slowly gaining commodity status. Pump houses, labyrinthine network of pipelines, and huge water tanks...and water becomes capital that flows.

The flowing capital offered rich opportunities for the water barons who eyed on the huge market. They invested, contributed and offered generously to improve our water systems. In due course, they would come to fix prices on our rivers, canals, wells and natural springs. Then they would provide us piped water with a particular corporate savour. Not to mention huge water bills.

This strategy is repeated in the case of soft drinks in a slightly different manner. Advertising is the *mantra* of the business. Coca-Cola spends \$1 billion annually on advertising and marketing worldwide. High-profile ad campaigns present these carbonated, chemical drinks as having properties that are least present in them. They create grave misconceptions making ignorant consumers more vulnerable to these campaigns. A perfect example to this is the Mexican mothers who feed their babies Coca-Cola instead of Milk.

The corporate giants adapt to the local cultures by giving local flavours to their advertisements. In countries where the West is being seen as a force to be resisted, the global players take their trump card of diversity. They would plan their market strategies so as to make the locals think that the product is native to their land. That's how Coca-Cola becomes Hindustan Coca-Cola in India and Pepsi sponsors Indian cricket team. Through careful interventions in the market as well as in minds, they get indigenised. They are even mystified and enter in to the world of novel myths. Thus they are attributed with different uses and qualities. In Russia it is believed that coke can smooth wrinkles while in Barbados people attribute that coke can turn copper in to silver. Coke can bring back the dead to life according to a myth in Haiti.

The third world poor, in an attempt to imbibe the manners and airs of American upper class life, becomes easy prey to the advertisement onslaught through mass media. At first these products aim at the urban rich whose consumer preferences are in turn imitated by the middle class and gradually by the lower strata of the society. Little by little the consumers are wished away from local products and traditional drinks. This drive towards Coca-

Cola and Pepsi won't stop by just making us addicts to soft drinks. Multinational junk foods would follow them with novel tactics of marketing.

The well-publicised *cola-wars* between Pepsi and coke have come of age now. Both have established their market in the US domestic market and in more than 200 countries worldwide. The market war is still on, but the real fight to establish themselves and the hullabaloo over it is no more heard. The American cola wars had the spirit and nature of a wrestling tourney. Both the contestants would claim upper hand over the other in advance. Furores follow. Dust is blown, with war cries and profanities. A staged fight would be presented. We take sides and finally are happy with a vicarious fight. Both wrestlers leave the bout grumbling.

Interestingly, on April 23, 1985 Pepsi claimed victory in the *war* as the coke decided to change its formula to fight back its rival's market seizure. In 1983 Coke held a taste test and Pepsi won as the majority preferred latter in blind taste test. This was followed by a spurt in the Pepsi sales. Coke tried to check the other's growth by introducing a new- formula drink. This proved a faulty move as the consumers rejected it. The war went on and occasional roar of victory.

The pep-coke war compelled both sides to indulge in multi-million advertisement campaigns and promotional drives. This in turn established, and in some cases introduced, soft drinks in new territories. The *war*, in effect and in essence was to woo the parched throats. While we vicariously watched the war between the two, we sipped their drinks. The real parched throats have nothing to do with the desire for colas. The particular thirst for soft drinks was originally cultivated in us through a meticulous process of marketing and advertisement. After introducing soft drinks and creating the *thirst* in us, they would give us the great opportunity to choose. (After all, the customers are kings and queens, you know!) We are given the choice to have one between the two brands. A clever corporate design to share the market among them.

The ultimate victims would be –

1. Those who gulp bottles of carbonated chemical drinks.
2. Local people whose natural resources and water are exploited to fuel the cola wars
3. Indigenous food habits and drinks. The native industries based

on these would also suffer as the global players edge them out of the market with their financial and technological might.

The first victim of the *cola-wars* is none other than America where the seeds of the cola wars were sown before it escalated to engulf the whole world- today, the people of United States consume more soft drinks than any other liquid. The parents and health activists are busy campaigning to rescue their children from becoming addicts to the colas. And the war would see to it that other countries follow suit. Yes, 'we will see the same wave catching on in the market after market, until, eventually, the number one beverage on earth will be soft drinks- our soft drinks.' And the war is to decide on whose soft drink it would be.

The cola wars in Vietnam to conquer the market brought it to the newspaper headlines. The media named it the second Vietnam War. In India the war is called the second freedom struggle and indigenous people are up in arms shouting 'colas quit India'. Here the battle lines sport different equations. Together the colas fight the battle against indigenous people. The *war* in India is between the soft drink giants and local people who resist the corporate ransack of water and natural recourses.

Pepsi and Coca-Cola stand together whenever the people challenged them. Their re-entry in to the market showed perfect understanding and corporate craftsmanship. When the colas planned to re-launch in India in 1989, they were met with symbolic protests and many deplored their re-entry. The cola-giants worked in perfect harmony and slowly shouldered their way in to the corridors of power and in to the market. The senior executives of both companies stayed in the same hotel in Delhi and 'perhaps hired the same lawyers' ¹ to bring their operations to a smooth finish. They played in chorus. When it was suicidal to compete in the virgin Indian soft drink market, in 1950's, Pepsi withdrew itself from India, complying with an alleged cartel arrangement leaving coke to solidify the market. By the end of 70's coke left India finding the Indian laws too stringent to comply with. The return of the colas in the fag end of 80's was more like a staged play. With multi million ad campaigns, they reintroduced their brands. First came Pepsi and taking cue from the 'rival' came coke, the bigger one and invaded the market with a vengeance. Both companies bought up local brands and established themselves in Indian market. Now

they enjoy duopoly in Indian market sharing a lion's share of the soft drink market. According a market assessment by ORG marg, Coca-Cola enjoys 57% of soft drink market and Pepsi 41 %. Leaving only 2% to the native players. The soft drinks segment, accounted for Rs 6,247 crore in sales in 2002. According to government estimates soft drinks marketed in India were 6540 million bottles in March 2001. The market growth rate, which was around 2-3% in '80s, increased to 5-6% in the early '90s and is presently 7-8% per annum.² These multinationals are also revving up to conquer the bottled water industry in India to aiming at the huge profits in the emerging market.

India witnessed another great occasion of corporate brotherhood when the CSE report on pesticide content in soft drinks laid bare the lofty claims of the soft drink giants. The warring rivals came hand in hand to defy the reality. The president of Pepsi Co India, Rajeev Bakshi and President and Chief Operating officer of Coca-Cola India, Sanjeev Guptha convened a joint press conference in Delhi to question the credibility of the CSE report. This event exposed both the tall claims of quality as well as the bogus battle between the corporate giants.

Meanwhile, when the cola's were still under fire for pesticide content in their brands, another international cola brand, Royal Crown cola (RC cola) entered Indian market, in the first week of October 2003. This one, the third in the world soft drink industry, is vying for the yet-to-be-explored markets in India. More drinks would come in tandem. The saturated Western market calls for another era of colonization.

*"...and then I lov'd thee,
And show'd thee all the qualities o'th' isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile:
Curs'd be I that did so!" (William Shakespeare, The Tempest)*

1- Multinational Monitor, August 15, 1999

2 pesticides in soft drinks, Analysis Report, CSE, New Delhi, 2003

Coke Fires Union Supporter in Los Angeles

June 16, 2003

LOS ANGELES (AFP) - A US truck driver who worked for the Coca-Cola Bottling Company has been sacked after being spotted glugging down a soft drink made by the rival Pepsi Company, union officials said.

Rick Bronson, who worked for the world's biggest soft drink firm for 12 years, was fired after someone reported him for supporting the enemy, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters said.

"Coke is really grasping at straws on this one," said Jim Santangelo, principal officer of Teamsters' branch of which Bronson is a member in El Monte, east of the California hub of Los Angeles.

"This is nothing more than an attempt to get rid of a pro-union employee. The Teamsters will fight every step of the way to get Rick's job back," he vowed.

The Teamsters claim that Coke really sacked the worker because of his work three months ago in organizing Coke merchandising workers under the powerful union's aegis.

The dismissal came after he was allegedly spotted in the back room of a store where he was making a delivery swigging on a Pepsi.

Bronson believes the person who reported him for publicly straying from his home brand had been hired by Coke to follow him and catch him off guard.

The union alleges that Coke fired Bronson under a company rule that bars "slander" of the world famous product after he was seen drinking the rival soft drink, Santangelo said.

"Hey, Rick's a Pepsi drinker, what can he do?" he said. But it's not as if he was seen drinking a Pepsi in Times Square on live TV—he was in the backroom of a store.

"This wasn't slanderous, they just wanted him because of his union activity and because he is a union leader," he claimed.

A spokesman for the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. in Southern California, Bob Phillips, declined to comment on the allegations

and on the case citing California's privacy laws, but said the company would not resort to a pretext to fire an employee active in a union.

"I can tell you that we have at this company a strict policy against retaliation and the company does not retaliate, nor do we tolerate any retaliation against employees," he said.

The Teamsters Local 848 has filed unfair labor practice charges against Coca-Cola over the incident, according to the union.

Coca-Cola in California and the Teamster have been at loggerheads over labor-related disputes, including strikes, involving Coke workers in recent months and negotiations over other contentious issues are still under way.

*AFP News on June 13, 2003.

Five

STRUGGLES IN INDIA

IN India, Coca-Cola has to tamper with a whole lot of problems. Their public relations endeavours and global financial clout have not come to their help in addressing these issues, for they raise some vital questions on the ownership of natural resources, the right to life and the right to live, issues of environment pollution along with the questions of local self-reliance. In its long history, Coke had never come to an eye-to-eye encounter with these issues in any other country it invaded.

Earlier coke had to meet head-on with (and is still facing) the workers struggle in Columbia. It is under fire for charges of discrimination of the AIDS infected workers in its plants in Africa. World communities rejected coca cola as a symbol of American aggression during the United States' invasion on Iraqi people. Moreover, as the most visible symbol of globalisation, struggles are on in the third world countries to boycott colas.

The Muslim world as well as the global community against war and aggression threw out Coca-Cola and Pepsi products from their daypack, when the men of Bush violated all international protocols to leave an already devastated third world country in ruins. Coca-Cola was considered as a party to American arrogance that left Millions of Iraqis desolate and distressed. Muslim countries fought back with indigenously developed soft drinks like Sam Sam cola and Mecca cola. The anti invasion protests took a turn to "commercial disobedience" all over the world and the sales of Pepsi and coke plunged.

Local manufacturers of the new soft drinks could not keep pace

with the demand from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. Mecca Colas showed up in the markets of Britain. Moreover, peace groups distributed 36,000 bottles of Mecca Cola at Hyde Park in London even as the Iranian government has banned ads for U.S.-manufactured goods.

Even though these people try to resist and fight back Americanisation and record their dissent over aggression, they, unintentionally, become part of the American soft drink culture, which they tried to defy. In these cases of anti-cola drives, we are given drinks that duplicate coke and Pepsi in colour, taste and content. They try to assimilate “the sweet taste of America ” without unpleasant “side effects.” This is another way to ape American culture and market in the name of anti- Americanism.

But the struggles against cola giants that started in the remote Indian villages raise issues that are very close to the bare existence of the struggling communities. When the villagers of the parched Indian lands stood up in protest against cola giants they had no symbolic slogans to cry out. Their concerns were never symbolic. The communities gathered for their common goals and their demands were simple, clear and loud: stop the water theft by multinational companies.

Plachimada- Coca-Cola’s Waterloo

The tribal might is burning the butts of the corporate water thief in Plachimada, Kerala. The resistance of the villagers in this remote south Indian hamlet have sent alarm signals to the global corporate exploiters as a whole. The unequalled struggle by the tribal population against Coca-Cola’s looting of water resources (which is still on, both the struggle and water pillage) ignited similar struggles all over India against corporate plunder of water and natural resources. Taking cue from Plachimada, people of Thane, in Maharashtra, Sivaganga in Tamilnadu, and Mehdiganj in varanasi are up in arms against softdrink giants. As the government stood strong with the corporate money power, people had to struggle with all means of resistance within the democracy. They never resorted to means of violence even after the state tried to suppress the struggles in the most undemocratic manner.

The unparalleled struggle in Plachimada asserts the peoples right to their natural resources. As the struggle crossed 600 days of continuous agitation, more and more people and groups began their protests against corporate plunder. Plachimada has shown its will and have given hope to millions of people worldwide. The local resistance has message- and a resolve too- that corporate rule over democracy and multinational antipathy towards the rights of the people should be questioned at all fronts. This demands a persistent alertness by the people and government.

History of a struggle

Krishna swami was a well-flourished farmer in Plachimada three years back. 'Once,' that's how the story always begin, his lush green paddy thrived adjacent to the plot where the coke plant stands now-on the other side of the barbed fences. Every morning he went to the paddy, tilled the land, watered, and reaped the produce of his sweat. Krishna swami had tomatoes and chilly grown in the farm along with a few acres of coconut palms. Now, he has nothing left- the fields went dry and crops failed to yield as the Coca-Cola factory sucked in all the ground water from the soil. Krishnaswami accuse that the suffocating fumes from the factory have spoiled the coconut palms in his land.¹ When the paddy failed, he tried groundnut in vain. Now this farmer is trying hard to keep going, thanks to the cola-giant's intense water exploitation.

"Three years ago, the little patch of land in the green, picturesque rolling hills of Palakkad yielded 50 sacks of rice and 1,500 coconuts a year. It provided work for dozens of labourers. Then Coke arrived and built a 40-acre bottling plant nearby. In his last harvest, Shahul Hameed, owner of a smallholding, could manage only five sacks of rice and just 200 coconuts. His irrigation wells have run dry, thanks to Coke drawing up to 1.5 million litres of water daily through its deep wells to bottle Coke, Fanta, Sprite and the drink the locals call, without irony, "Thumbs-Up"."²

Krishna swami and Shahul Hameed are just two among hundreds of victims of the corporate greed. Cultivation of paddy in over 600 acres of land was abandoned forcing farmers to experiment with other crops, severely affecting the livelihood of the natives', mostly indigenous people who depended on agricultural labours for their daily bread. The poor tribal people of Plachimada were forced to

walk long distances to fetch drinking water. Salination and solid residues have made their water resources useless. As suffering reached its limit, the illiterate farmers and tribal people organised to regain the right on their soil, water and life. The saga of the struggle begins there.

Plachimada in the Chittoor taluk of Palakkad district is an agricultural area predominantly inhabited by tribal people. The rich soil of this rain shadow region produces rice, coconut, sesame, groundnut, mango, banana and vegetables along with other seasonal crops. The people, mostly landless agricultural labourers, depended on these lands for sustenance. In 1998, it saw truckloads of Mirinda, Coca-Cola and Fanta being shipped off from the largest Indian coke plant started in Plachimada and the subsequent fall in the agricultural output. The corporate giant sucked in the ground water resources and left the paddy fields dry.

The multinational started its operation in Plachimada in 40 acres of agricultural land reclaimed for the purpose. The Coca-Cola plant is situated hardly two kilometres from the Meenkara dam reservoir and Chittoorpuzha River is just 2km away from the plant. The moolanthodu main canal coming from Moolamthara barrage passes less than 10 metres north of the factory compound.³ No wonder the satellite studies by Coca-Cola preferred this particular location to put up their plant .

As the soft drink plant went on with its incessant exploitation of water, the people began to face acute water scarcity. The water table fell and water levels in the open wells as well as the bore wells in the surrounding area dropped in an unprecedented manner. More and more people were affected as the ground water resources depleted resulting in drastic fall in the water table of vast areas of Perumatti Panchayat where the plant is situated. Salinity and hardness of ground water significantly increased. Many developed stomach disorders and rashes on the skin after using the water from the wells. The District Medical Officer of Palakkad, warned people against using the contaminated water for domestic purposes and for drinking.

The company blamed it on the decrease in the rainfall. But independent studies conducted by Non Governmental Organisations exposed the role of the plant in the fall in the water level. They found that the coke plant is responsible for the deterioration of

water quality in the surrounding area.

A study by the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), had warned the depletion of water resources if the company were allowed to continue with its unrestrained exploitation. The study had warned deterioration in the quality of groundwater because of this. Another study by the members of INTACH (Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage) under the leadership of the well-known scientist and environmentalist, Dr. Sathishchandran Nair, counter the claims by the plant authorities. The study pointed to the plight of the hundreds of poor tribal families who live in the colonies close to the coke plant. "The severe water contamination and increasing scarcity of potable water after the commissioning of the cola plant has adversely affected these people particularly women. After normal work hours, the women must now go long distances to collect potable water for house hold use," the report says. Apart from the acute water crisis, the natives had to suffer the foul smell and contaminated water from the factory. The studies pointed to the fact that the water in the wells nearest to the plant was unpotable, possibly because the minerals of the deeper soil moved to the upper layers. Dr. Sathish Chandran Nair reported that apart from mere increase in salinity and hardness due to calcium salts, the water from some open wells and shallow borewells nearby had an 'extremely unpleasant strong bitter taste.' The studies also pointed to the fact that the groundwater extracted by the company is enough to satisfy the total domestic needs of about 20,000 people, about two-thirds of the population of the Perumatty panchayat. At one point, the company itself had to ferry in truckloads of water from outside as the borewells in the plant compound dried up. In addition, the cola company dumped the waste from the plant near the canals causing water pollution. The people also complaint that the toxic wastes from the plant has seeped in to the nearby wells contaminating the wells and groundwater resources which, had become unusable even before that.

At their wits end, people of Plachimada finally began their protests in the open under the banner of Adivasi samrkshana Samithy(tribal protection committee). CK Janu, the renowned tribal leader of the Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samithy and Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha launched the intense struggle outside the plant on April 22, 2002. Even though, the leaders of the local wings of the major political parties of Kerala dissociated themselves from the struggle,

the people's will never faltered. People's agitation grew in strength as they formed a wider platform called *Coca-Cola virudha samara samithy*.

The struggle saw various non-violent forms of protests as the authorities preferred to keep mum on the issue. The plant had hired the local police force to "protect" the plant from what it called "a handful of extremist protesters". One week after the struggle began the coke plant authorities tried to appease the people by giving them truckloads of water. But, the attempt failed miserably, as the people preferred to suffer than to take alms from the company that pushed them away from life. Instead, the people demanded, the company should take steps to restore groundwater resources and ensure continuous water supply in the affected villages, or quit from Plachimada forever.

The coca cola accused the protests as 'politically motivated' even as the government and all major political parties of the state took no notice of the struggles. The mainstream media ignored the struggle for almost a year of prolonged resistance. The company arranged another sit in protest by the employees of the factory against the people's protests demanding action against the anti Coca-Cola activists' alleged attack on them. The management of the company have arranged for regular deployment of police force outside the plant. The police have so far arrested hundreds of protesters including women and children.

The earlier indifference of the mainstream media slowly changed as the tribal resistance continued unabated and as it drew many international figures like Medha Patkar and Vandana Siva in to the forefront of the struggle. Plachimada shot in to international media glare as the "Face the Facts" programme of the BBC's Radio4 channel exposed that the Coca-Cola plant in Plachimada disposed toxic waste from the plant duped in as fertiliser to the already impoverished farmers of Plachimada and neighbouring villages. In the report aired on July 26,2003, BBC revealed that the sludge Coca-Cola sold as fertiliser, contained dangerous toxics. BBC had the Samples taken from Plachimada analysed by Exeter University, in the United Kingdom. The scientific analysis revealed high levels of lead and Cadmium in the 'cola-fertiliser'. Water samples collected from the wells close to the coke plant had a lead content of 65mg per litre. As per the World health organisation's guidelines, the danger limit

is 10mg per litre. The solid waste from the factory contained 100mg of Cadmium and 1100mg of Lead per kg. Some other heavy metals, including nickel, chromium and zinc, were also present much above the desirable limits. Moreover, the analyses failed to trace any fertilising quality in the samples collected.

In the BBC programme, Professor John Henry, Britain's leading expert on lead poisoning, commented: "The results have devastating consequences for those living near the areas where this waste has been dumped and for the thousands who depend on crops produced in these fields. Lead is one of the world's most potent neurotoxins and the effects of exposure are irreversible. Lead exposure can cause mental retardation, anaemia, bowel problems and in children the damage is often more severe and can prove fatal. Cadmium is a known carcinogen and the fact that it has been found in waste from the plant is extremely disturbing. The use of this effluent as a fertiliser should cease immediately and a full investigation be launched."

Cadmium is also very dangerous as plants take it up, and subsequently reach human body affecting the functioning of kidneys and liver. Cadmium is a known carcinogenic, the report warned. "Repeated applications of sludge containing these sorts of levels of cadmium and lead to agricultural soils would undoubtedly lead to a build-up of these toxic metals in the soil, from where cadmium could then be transferred to plants - and therefore into the food chain. "This contaminated sludge sample also contained a high component of phosphorus, presumably the reason for its promotion as a fertiliser. However, the presence of high levels of cadmium and lead in the sludge make it completely unsuitable for use as a fertiliser."

The BBC report confirmed the earlier studies by the NGOs who had warned of the toxicity of the "manure" from the cola factory. The study Dr Sathish Chandran Nair and another enquiry by a human rights forum, Jananeethi 4 had taken note of the waste from the factory, which is dumped in the farmlands and near the irrigation canals. The factory authorities and the contractors hoodwinked the farmers to pile up the fertile lands with toxic waste. Large quantities of waste were dumped in the farms and people unaware of the consequences, were made victims of another foul play by the corporate giant. "In the irrigated coconut groves, the waste materials

have got spread around through irrigation canals over a large area and are seeping in to the soil, contaminating soil, water and air," the study said. Sathish Chandran Nair and his investigation team had expressed concern over the dumping on the banks of irrigation canals. They had warned of serious implications of the reckless and callous act by the company on vegetation, agriculture and people. The labourers, who worked in the fields where the cola-manure was used, developed rashes and skin deformities. Other studies into the issue had also taken note of the toxic nature of the waste given away to farmers as fertiliser.

Newspapers reported that the company 'safely and economically' dumped 5000 tonnes of toxic waste as fertiliser in the farmlands of Chittoor taluk, which is highest contributor to the rice bowl of Kerala, and in Pollachi, Tamilnadu. From the year 2000, onwards the people were made to believe that the sludge is good manure. The contractors responsible for the waste disposal inveigled the farmers to buy the cola-fertiliser by offering it for lower prices than common ones. The company even offered the manure free of charge as a goodwill exercise of a 'friendly corporate neighbour'. Anyway, the farmers had to pay for it with their life and sustenance. The manure incurred heavy loss to the coconut farms and other crops where it was applied.

The BBC report made it to international headlines, forcing the company to 'face the facts' and there seemed no easy way out for Coca-Cola. Nevertheless, the Hindustan Coca-Cola Ltd authorities were equipped with greater ways of corporate damage control trickery. The company outrightly denied the allegations saying that the wastes from the plant contained no toxic material. They hastened to add that the lead and cadmium content was within allowed limits. The company struggled to prove the non-toxicity of the waste by claiming that they apply it in the plant compound regularly. They also produced a couple of private laboratory analyses to support their argument. As a final effort to save the show, D S Mathoor, Technical Vice President of Hindustan Coca-Cola Ltd, stated that the company never ever claimed the waste a fertiliser! Oops! That was lying king-size.

Moreover, it went against the earlier assertions by another Coca-Cola bigwig Sunil Guptha (vice president, HCCL) who talked highly on cola-manure. Guptha had claimed on the record that the sludge

waste from the plant was fertiliser and said the company complied with all local environmental laws and stood for the welfare of the community.

On August seven, 2003 newspapers carried the report of tests conducted by the Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) that confirmed the toxic nature of the sludge generated by Coca-Cola's bottling plant at Plachimada. The KSPCB found far greater amount of toxics in the sludge than that reported by the BBC. As a result, the authorities ordered the company to stop supplying it as manure to the farmers. The state pollution control boards of Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal also detected the presence of Cadmium in the sludge supplied as fertiliser by the cola plants in the states. Samples from three West Bengal coke plants contained high levels of cadmium and liquid emissions from one factory had high Lead presence in it. The samples collected from a Pepsi plant in West Bengal too were found having alarming levels of Cadmium. Another report by the Central Pollution Control Board of India confirmed the incidence of high quantity of cadmium in the samples of sludge taken from the Coca-Cola factory. The presence of Cadmium detected was 338.8 mg/kg.

The water exploitation and defiance of environmental standards by the Pepsi plant in the Kanjikkode industrial area in Palakkad district also came under the media glare as the people started grumbling over the unfair ways of its functioning. With this, the struggle by the tribal people of Plachimada took a new turn. More people, activists and politicians came forward in support of the struggle and the media had to pay more attention to the issues raised by the villagers.

On 7th April, the Perumatty Grama Panchayat (the Village Council) revoked the licence to the coke plant and gave pack up orders to the global giant. The David-Goliath fight entered another significant phase by raising the voice of self-determination and assertion of the community's right to indigenous natural recourses. This daring resolution by the Grama Panchayat was taken against all odds as the cancellation meant losing almost half of its annual income of Rs. 7, 00,000. On May 16, the Kerala High Court issued a stay order on the decision of the Perumatty grama panchayat to cancel the licence granted to the coke plant. The company argued before the court that it was denied a hearing by the panchayat,

which had taken its decision in an arbitrary manner. In response to this, the court ordered that the *status quo* should be maintained in the matter and asked the Secretary, Local Self Government, to take a decision on the issue of licensing. As per the judgement, the secretary to the local self-government overruled the Gramapanchayat decision. Undaunted by the reversal, the panchayat filed another petition in the high court asking for justice against the decision by the secretary. On December, 16, 2003, the High Court of Kerala made a historic judgement declaring that the local self government body have full right to check the water exploitation by the cola giant. The judgement categorically rejected Coca-Cola's claims and directed the company to stop water theft and find alternative water resources within one month. Whatever the outcome of the struggle would be, the Perumatty Gramapanchayat made history by asserting the people's will and resolve against corporate theft and also against the forces that undermine people's right to self determination.

The gramapanchayat also alleged, in a report submitted to the District collector, that the company violated Kerala Land Use Act by reclaiming agricultural land for industrial purposes. The report also stated that the company illegally changed the site plan submitted to the panchayat in order to get permission for building the plant. The HCCL spend crores on advertisements to patch up the tattered image of the company. When the allegations of toxic sludge degraded the image of the company, the officials announced that the public are always welcome to visit the bottling plants and clear their suspicions. But on 29 August, 2003 Newspapers carried reports that a scientific team from National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, which is run by the central health and family welfare department, were refused entry by the company. The plant authorities, the reports said, insisted on prior permission even as the central committee explained that they were on a lightning search to look in to the alleged toxic presence in the sludge. The scientific team had to collect samples from outside the plant as the plant authorities refused to budge.

The president of Pudussery Gramapanchayat had had a similar experience from the authorities of Pepsi. They stopped the elected members of the panchayat from entering the plant in the Kanjikkode industrial area. Pepsi is facing public fury for polluting waters and for contaminating the soil and water resources. People allege that

the company, commissioned in March 2001, is answerable for an unprecedented paucity of water in the neighbouring villages. The Gramapanchayat council convened on May 15, 2003 and decided to withdraw the licence issued for the bottling plant in November 2000. High court stayed the Panchayat decision in August, 2003. And the people's struggle for drinking water, decent living conditions and for justice continues.

Plachimada exposes some common traits of multinational exploiters- a criminal disregard for people and environment coupled with apathy towards democracy and laws of the land. The first victims of the corporate tyranny would always be the common people of the country they invade. MNCs would pursue their upward stride by polluting the land and resources even as the government leave the country to the mercy of the global giants.

1 varthamanam azhchapathippu, august 17, 2003

2 Heat on Cold Drinks, Arjun Sen, Statesman. 19 August 2003

3 DR. Sathish Chandran Nair, the adverse environmental impact of the Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages private Ltd. Located in the Plachimada Area in the Perumatty panchayat in the Chittur Taluk of the Palakkad District, 2002

4 Jananeethi Report on the amplitude of environmental and human rights ramification by the HCCBPL, july, 2002.

Mehdi ganj, Varanasi

On may 10, 2003 the people of Mehdi ganj, near Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh marched to the Coca-Cola plant in their village demanding the closure of plant. They were alleging that the plant is guilty of exploiting the aquifers of the village incessantly, leaving the villagers to run for water. As the villagers' protest march reached the plant gate, the UP state police force started beating up the agitators. Though the march was dispersed using force, there began a sustained struggle demanding 'Coca Cola Bhagao, Gaon Bachao' (Save the Village, Chase Away Coke).

On September, 2003, hundreds of people including the local villagers and supporters of other organisations under the banner of National Alliance of Peoples Movements (NAPM) took out a silent agitation against the coca cola bottling plant and against the drawing up of water from Mehandiganj and the nearby Rajatalab villages. The Coca-Cola Company had its private security men armed with iron rods to rough up the peaceful march headed by the eminent

activists including the Ramon Magsaysay award winner and convenor of National Alliance of people's movements, Mr. Sandeep Pande. While the goons of the corporate giant pounded the peaceful gathering with vengeance, the state police watched in silent support. Pandey received injuries to his foot with an iron rod, several baton blows on his back and external head injury caused due to a hit by a rifle butt. Several others received body blows with batons and injured. About 400 people were arrested from the demonstration site and taken to police station and 77 were put into custody and released after 2 days on personal bond.

In Mehdiganj and in many other Coca-Cola hotspots in India, the company resort to Columbian model suppression. The state machinery and private security force come handy for the global giant to 'deal fairly' with the protesters. And the democratically elected government, act under the orders of the multinational giant, adding even more injuries to people's woe.

However, the attempts to crush the movement failed even as the misery of the villagers continued unabated. The villagers avowedly pursue with their protests outside the plant of Bharat Coca Cola Bottling North East Private Limited - an Indian arm of Coca Cola, situated 20 km away from the holy city of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. Sajha Sanskriti Manch - a platform comprising the Samajwadi Jan Parishad and several other peoples organizations, women's groups and human rights organizations in Varanasi - has submitted a memorandum to the District Magistrate, demanding cancellation of the industrial license of the bottling plant. About 300 activists of the Manch took out a march on July 4, 2003 at the district headquarters demanding cancellation of the license of the bottling plant.

The Coca-Cola plant in Mehdiganj inherits a dubious past fraught with fraudulent corporate practices. In the month of February 1999, When Coca-Cola took over the plant that belonged to the Parle soft drinks plant of Kejriwal Beverages Pvt. Ltd., which was bottling Thums Up, Limca and Gold Spot, the global giant tried to evade revenue stamp duty worth Rs 1,50,7500 [US\$ 31,406]. The company, which boasts of its global leadership and which is one of the top five foreign investors in India, was found guilty. The court asked Coca-Cola to pay an equal amount of penalty — under Section 47 A of Indian Stamps Act. The case, filed in

April 2001 by the Uttar Pradesh Government, was the outcome of lobbying by local residents. The verdict takes note of the fact that the company has illegally occupied a portion of Common Property Resources of the village. The company enjoys subsidized rates for electricity since this illegally occupied land comes under the definition of agricultural land.

The plant is situated primarily in agricultural land and occupies seven acres. The wastewater from the plant is drained out in to the nearby canal, which would eventually pollute the waters of river Ganga. When the construction of a superhighway made it difficult to dispose the effluent in to the canal, the company began emptying the affluent waters in to the neighbouring fields and mango groves. Solid chemical waste is also dumped in nearby fields. The total area submerged by the factory waste is about 20 acres. Grass in the submerged area, as well as crops of wheat, paddy and chickpeas have been destroyed. In addition, The Company distributed toxic waste to the farmers duping it as fertilisers. The consequences were disastrous. One full crop was left sterile. The local people testify that some huge trees, including neem trees, were also perished. They also complain that the polluted water from the plant causes rashes on human skin. The filthy toxic waters stagnating in the fields have become a breeding ground for malaria spreading mosquitoes.

The cola plant draws out more than one and a half lakh litres of ground water daily forcing the people to run for water. The company is held responsible for the increasingly drying aquifers of the region. Heavy consumption of groundwater by the company has lead to lowering of the groundwater level from 15 to 40 feet. Drinking water, earlier supplied through a pipeline from neighbouring Bhikharipur on the other side of the highway, was disrupted due to construction of the World Bank funded super-highway linking the metropolitan cities. Now villagers are left with a few hand pumps to meet their water needs. Thus, the people of Mehdiganj are now facing the aggression of the state sponsored development as well as the corporate plunder of water along with the contamination of natural resources.

‘Every hour, a truck carrying 550 crates of bottled soft drinks leaves the factory premises.’ - reports Aflatoon, State General Secretary of the Samajwadi Jan Parishad. ‘The plant has about 60 permanent employees and almost 400 contracted labor. The salary

of the general manager of the plant is Rs 120,000 per month (approximately US\$ 2400) whereas a worker gets Rs. 66 (about US \$ 1.3 per day). Many of the workers are weavers who were rendered jobless when power-looms gradually replaced handlooms for weaving the famous Benarasi sarees. Local residents say that young people of the village were promised permanent jobs, but these promises were not kept.¹ Aflatoon adds that efforts to organize the contract workers in the plant were met with oppressive measures. Five workers were imprisoned on false criminal charges filed by the company.

As the pressure mounted, the central pollution control board ordered an enquiry in to the pollution caused by the plant, in June 2003 the coke company also started construction of one kilometre-long pipeline to dispose waste. However the people's struggle demanding an end to the water exploitation is still on.

1 National Alliance of Peoples Movement. Press release. September 15, 2003

2 Coke in Varanasi: Facing Local Ire, Aflatoon, July 10, 2003, corpwatch India.

Sivaganga

Taking cue from the struggles in Plachimada, Mehdiganj and Kudus, the people of Sivaganga in TamilNadu took to streets against the proposed softdrink plant in their village. The villagers who live in the rain shadow areas of Tamilnadu already suffer acute water crisis. Exposed to acute drought conditions for several years, the people of the district, particularly in the villages, have had little access to water. The proposed Coca-Cola plant would aggravate the crisis. Moreover, the plight of the villagers of Plachimada, in Kerala, was enough to be concerned.

When the proposal to commence a new coke bottling plant as part of the sugar factory in the locality was leaked, the people felt the need to rise in fight against it. They arranged peaceful pre-emptive struggles against the proposed project. Sakthi Sugar Mills at Padamathur, about 20 km from the Sivaganga district headquarters town, entered into a contract with the transnational soft drink maker to prepare and package some of its products using groundwater resources and was about to begin operation from April 2003. According to the sugar mill authorities, the bottling plant would consume 75,000 litres a day.

People suspect that the company is covering up many facts and that the actual intake of water would be much higher. They fear that the packaging unit might resort to indiscriminate exploitation of groundwater, leading to scarcity of water for drinking and irrigation purposes. The sugar mill authorities assert that the new bottling plant would be using the unutilised part of the quantum of water permitted (49 lakh litres a day) specifically for industrial use by the sugar mill. But the people charge that the unit had plans to dig borewells up to a depth of 3,000 feet (900 metres) on the Vaigai riverbed.³ This would subsequently affect the Comprehensive Drinking Water Supply Scheme that fetch water to the 3.5-lakh people in 80 villages and would jeopardise water supply to Sivaganga, Manamadurai and Thiruppuvanam towns. This water supply scheme singularly depends on the water from the Vaigai riverbed.

On April 28, more than 7,000 people defied a ban order to participate in a rally against Sakthi Sugar Mills at Padamathur. The protestors were particularly concerned about a possible discharge of chemical waste from the soft drink plant, and the resultant environmental hazards. The people alleged that the effluents let into a canal during a trial run of the unit caused the death of a couple of cows and a score of sheep in Kannaarkudiyiruppu village, close to the factory.

3 Communities Protest Coca-Cola in Tamil Nadu, S.Viswanathan *Frontline*, June 20, 2003. www.corpwatchindia.org

Thane

“Why interfere with the water supply of poor people?”

The villagers of the Kudu, in the Wada taluka of Thane district have nothing more to plead. Their demand is simple “please let us live.”

The Kudus villagers are not demanding the closure of the cola factory. Their just demand is for proper access to drinking water, which they enjoyed before the soft drink giant put up a plant in the village.

The villagers say that region had enough water to meet the needs of the people and that they had never faced water scarcity in the past. A check dam built at Gandhre village by the irrigation

department ensured regular supply to surrounding villages. Enter coca cola, and there begins the woes of the villagers. The multinational started its operations in the Kudus village in 1997.

Earlier the coke plant, with a capacity of 30 lakh litres per day, was allowed to draw water from the Vaitarna River. The company had laid a pipeline at a cost of two crores to fetch water from the river. Due to incessant water exploitation, the water levels in the area dropped. The river dried out and the company was given permission to draw 3,00,000 litres of water per day from the check dam, which was the chief source of water for the villagers. The same water would have served the need of 75,000 villagers per day. Coca Cola's critics say the Maharashtra government has given several facilities to the company, including tax concessions, land at throwaway prices acquired from farmers, and a plentiful supply of water at a very cheap price. People allege that the company pays only Rs 378 per 10,000 litre.⁴ Though the company has dug borewells inside the plant, the cola officials assert that they are not using these sources.

4 Villagers Blame Coca Cola for Water Woes in Thane, Vidyadhar Date, Times News

Network, June 5, 2003

Chapter 6

HEALTH MATTERS

“My 15 yr. Old daughter Heli Kools went to a local shop ‘The Danish Coke zone’ near kamala Park in front petrol pump at Bhopal, on evening of 14th November 2000, along with some of her friends. All of them ordered different cold drinks for themselves. My daughter asked for a Sprite.” V.P.Kulshrestha begins a personal anecdote. “After consuming one bottle of sprite, she took another bottle along with Ice Cream, One of her friend also ordered for a Sprite but after a sip or two, did not like the taste and gave it to my daughter, who consumed the remaining liquid from that bottle. Since that evening she complained of general malaise, nausea etc. and for next two days, there were severe but gradual loose motions, abdominal pain and headache. On third day she became very weak with lots of vomiting and abdominal pain. During afternoon of the third day itself we found that her urine was dark red. For which we consulted with the Doctor, who advised us to get it examined. By the late evening she could produce very little amount of urine that was of dark red colour but quantity was insufficient for testing

“By next morning she was very weak, unable to stand up even and did not produce any urine and hence we took her to a private hospital, where they declared that she is suffering with acute Haemolysis which led to acute renal shut down. She was given steroids to check the haemolysis. She had to undergo approximately a dozen of dialysis at a very frequent interval.

On 19th December she was released from the hospital, after a period of more than one month. She lost almost 10 kg of weight. And It took a few more days for her to recover.

This was the big news of the town and media has tried to cover the whole incidence. A few cuttings of Hindustan Times (Bhopal Edition) and Free Press journal carried the news prominently. These cuttings made Coca-Cola worried. It appears that being a multinational giant they are in a position to influence the Media. Besides the small group of newspapers who are most of the time under pressure on account of advertisement, Coca-Cola could influence the Weekly magazine "India Today." In the January 29, 2001 issue of the weekly carried the story of my daughter's illness titled "Deadly Doses", but instead of saying that illness was on account of ingestion of Sprite, they mentioned, that it was due to some medicine called Combiflame, They have not mentioned the word "cold drink" even a single time in whole of the article. I think it is the first time in my life, I could understand the meaning of "Safed Jhoot". I had requested, "India Today", to immediately, not only publish the strong contradiction, but to cover a full story with facts and figures. After lot of fight with India Today, they published, my small letter with some clarification of theirs with regret, in the column of letter to editor, which only a handful people read."

The coke company could have easily rejected this complaint as an unusual exception or as a deliberate effort to malign its reputation, had there been no similar instances reported from every corner of the world. Coke, Pepsi and other global vendors of caramel coloured "liquid candies" could have evaded the responsibility of spoiling the health of generations, had America did not face the epidemic of over sugared kids. Carbonated soft drinks stand culprits of unethical merchantism causing irreparable damages to the health of billions of soft drink addicts.

Soft drinks are basically made of sugar, caffeine, dyes and acid (which makes the bubbles). Regular (non-diet) soft drinks contain about 7 to 14 percent sweeteners. Many soft drinks contain caramel, which is added to give dark appearance. Scientists warn that the caramel colouring used in soft drinks may be a carcinogen. Many diet soft drinks are sweetened with aspartame, an intense sweetener that provides less than one calorie in a 12-ounce can. In addition, saccharin, sucralose and acesulfame-K are used in soft drinks today. Most non-diet soft drinks are sweetened with high fructose corn syrup, sugar or a combination of both. Soft drink manufacturers are the largest single user of refined sugar in the United States. It is

a proven fact that sugar increases insulin levels, resulting in high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, weight gain, premature aging and numerous side effects.

Diet drinks that substitute aspartame (NutraSweet) for the sugar, which is known to affect the brain and nervous system. It's well known that Coca-Cola has the magical capacity to perform the great vanishing trick with a tooth dipped in it for 24 hours. The secret ingredient in coke is inherited with the unique power to weaken the bones in our body.

The soft drinks are reputed to cause kidney stone, obesity and a number of other health problems. Soft drink culture had its toll on generations of Americans and infected them with obesity and diabetic illnesses. The Saccharin often found in the 'diet' varieties has to carry a health warning in the U.S. as it has been linked to the development of bladder cancer. The Food Commission undertook a survey in US in 1991 of soft drink brands and found a number of them, not just those labelled 'diet' drinks, contained saccharin as well as sugar.

Dr Joseph Mercola and Rachel Droege share some shocking revelations on the effects of soft drinks I: Coca-cola uses aspartame (NutraSweet, et al), a toxic substance that causes not only individual symptoms, but can mimic entire syndromes, such as CFIDS (chronic fatigue and immune deficiency syndrome). It can also cause grand mal seizures, decreased vision, pain in the eyes, decreased tears, ringing in the ears, hearing impairment, headache, dizziness and unsteadiness, confusion, memory loss, drowsiness, sleepiness, slurring of speech, numbness and tingling, tremors, depression, irritability, aggression, anxiety, insomnia, phobias, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, high blood pressure, nausea, diarrhea, abdominal pain, itching, hives, menstrual changes, weight gain, hair thinning and hair loss, urinary burning and frequency, excessive thirst, fluid retention, bloating, increased infection, and even death.

Coca-cola removed all ostensible NutraSweet and Equal labels from their diet products' cans, but is forced to include aspartame in the ingredients list. The aspartame in Diet Coke can block the brain's ability to determine a satisfied appetite causing weight gain. Comparison of the effects of aspartame-sweetened and sucrose sweetened soft drinks on food intake and appetite ratings of female restrained eaters suggested that substitution of sucrose-sweetened

drinks for diet drinks does not reduce energy intake and may even result in higher intake during the subsequent day. 2

DR Mercola and Droege go on to analyse each known ingredients in coke and show how dangerous each drop of the caramel coloured drink can be. The Phosphoric Acid in cola reduces our ability to use calcium, which can lead to osteoporosis or softening of the teeth and bones. Phosphoric acid also neutralizes the hydrochloric acid in stomach, jeopardising our digestion, making it difficult to absorb nutrients.

Aspartame used as a sugar substitute in diet colas causes 92 different health side effects including brain tumours, birth defects, diabetes, emotional disorders and epilepsy. Further, when aspartame is stored for long periods of time or kept in warm areas it changes to methanol, an alcohol that converts to formaldehyde and formic acid, which are known carcinogens.

These Caffeinated drinks can cause jitters, insomnia, high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, elevated blood cholesterol levels, vitamin and mineral depletion, breast lumps, birth defects, and perhaps some forms of cancer. Caffeine- a methylated xanthine acts as a mild central nervous system stimulant present in carbonated beverages. Large amounts of caffeine consumption can cause diseases and disorders such as insomnia, nervousness, anxiety, irritability, and deviations from the normal heart rate. A major concern about caffeine is that it increases the excretion of calcium in urine, which increases the risk for osteoporosis in heavy caffeine consumers. Some epidemiological studies describe exposure to caffeine during pregnancy as well as the occurrence of congenital malformations, fetal growth retardation, and miscarriages (spontaneous abortions), behavioural effects and maternal fertility problems.

Aromatic substances, sweeteners carbon dioxide, colouring matter, acids, preservatives, antioxidants and other additives are present in different composition in different soft drinks. Consumption of a large number of soft drinks would increase acid levels (citric, malic and phosphoric acid) throughout the body causing gastronomic distress due to the inflammation of the stomach and erosion of the stomach lining leading to painful stomachache. The regular consumption of soft drinks upsets the delicate acid-alkaline balance of the stomach thus leading to indigestion and gassiness.

Carbon dioxide emitted from soft drinks is a waste product that humans excrete and can be harmful when ingested. Large amounts of sugar, bubbles caused by carbon dioxide, and phosphoric acid that are found in soft drinks remove nutritious minerals from bones allowing the bones to become weak and increasing the risk for them to break. This is done by the phosphoric acid disrupting the calcium phosphorous ratio, which dissolves calcium from the bones.

<http://www.ctrlatesc.org/articles/03/08/12/1336201.shtml>

Third world drink!

In Latin America, coca-cola has become a cult. Multi million ad campaigns have made Latin Americans addictive to soft drinks and junk food culture. Millions of Latin American children subscribe to the 'multinational diet' with little nutritional value. More over the Latin American population, in general have come to accept soft drinks as an integral part of their daily diet.

A Mexican priest wrote, in 1974, that Mexican villagers believed soft drinks should be consumed every day, leading to lower consumption of natural products such as fruit. Some families were even seen to be selling their natural products in order to buy soft drinks. Mexican people take 30 million bottles of soft drinks a year. This figure is three times higher than the milk consumption in the country.

Latin American mothers often give Coca-Cola to their infants in baby bottles making them addicts and to disastrous side effects. In the Maquiladoras of Mexico, drinking water is so scarce that babies and children drink Coca-Cola and Pepsi.⁴

In 1969, it was reported that babies in Zambia had become malnourished because their mothers fed them coke and Fanta, believing it was the best thing they could give their children. Around the time 54% of the seriously malnourished children admitted to the children's hospital at Ndola had 'Fantababy' written on their progress charts. The Zambian government subsequently banned Fanta advertisements "because of their influence on the poor".⁵

A study at the Nutrition Institute in Rio de Janeiro conducted in 1991 found high levels of consumption of Coke, Fanta and Pepsi in its survey of school children between 6-14 years old. All the children showed signs of vitamin deficiency whilst the poorest of

them also showed protein/calorie malnutrition.

Soft drinks are replacing common drinking water, as it is believed that these coloured drinks are safer than the water supplied by Municipalities. However, it is a proven fact that these drinks, at best are, coloured, carbonated, and chemically polluted municipal water. Water, for soft drink production, is most often taken from municipal supply or from the same sources that provide for local supply. The water usually is processed further to ensure uniformity of the finished product. In some bottling plants, the water-treatment equipment may simply consist of a sand filter to remove minute solid matter and activated carbon purifier to remove colour, chlorine, and other tastes or odours. In most plants, however, a process known as super chlorination and coagulation treats water. There, the water is exposed for two hours to a high concentration of chlorine and to a flocculent, which removes such organisms as plankton (minute plants and animals); it then passes through a sand filter and activated carbon. Though the companies claim high quality and sophisticated techniques of purification, these soft drinks are never free of pesticide residues and other pollutants.

The North American public is growing more aware of the disastrous effects of the soft drink and Junk food consumption. Many are slowly moving away from their junk food habits. Years of public awareness campaigns by concerned health and consumer organisations have made people aware of the ill effects of junk food culture. In order to keep the consumer base moving away from the corporate stranglehold, the multinationals are out with a 'catch them young' promotional drive. Coke and other soft drink companies pay millions of dollars for exclusive marketing rights in schools and keep their vending machines in school premises. The schools gain additional funds by sacrificing the health of children. Arrays of soft drink vending machines occupy the hallways and school corridors in the US, always luring the children to disaster. The contracts often in the guise of educational assistance leave no one guessed about the intentions of the soft drink giants. One 10-year contract that the Pepsi-Cola Company signed in 1997 with the Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, stated that "if the Board of Education actively enforces the policy in which vending machines are turned off during the school day," the school will not get its guaranteed commission.

Thanks to these machines, the American children are becoming big flesh bags even in their early teens. Obesity related illnesses increase as their whole body slackens. Over sugared children outnumber healthy ones. Physicians have warned that the chances are that girls who are fed on soft drinks may suffer osteoporosis when they get older as the calcium intake goes down. This may put them in risk of broken bones.

Centre for Science in the Public Interest reports that an average 12- to 19-year old American male drinks 868 cans of soda pop a year. The average 13- to 18-year-old male who consumes soda pop gulps down more than three 12-ounce cans per day, while ten percent of those males drink seven or more cans a day. The average 13- to 18-year-old female soda drinker imbibes more than two cans a day, and ten percent of females consume five or more cans a day. Overall, Americans are consuming twice as much soda pop as they did 25 years ago. And they're spending \$54 billion a year on it. That's twice what is spent on books every year.

Many American federal states have come out to fight back the onslaught of soft drinks in the school campuses. The parents and public health workers have gained considerable victory in doing so. Their concern led to legislations curbing the soft drink invasion in schools in many states of USA.

The soft drink giants could cover up the health problems they create with high voltage public relation exercises and misinformation campaigns. The corporate financial might has made many health watchdogs in America compliant to the soft drink manufacturers. According to "Lifting the Veil of Secrecy," a July report by the Centre for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI), an American organisation, Coca-Cola contributed \$1-million to the American Academy of Paediatric Dentistry (AAPD). Before the 2003 donation, the AAPD recognized the connection between sugary drinks and dental disease. When AAPD president David Curtis defended the Coke deal, he told reporters that the "scientific evidence is certainly not clear" on the role soft drinks play.

"What a difference a million dollars makes," CSPI executive director Michael E. Jacobson wrote in the report's introduction, referring to the AAPD's coupling with the world's leading soda manufacturer. "And what a coup for Coca-Cola, turning a potential

opponent into an ally. You can bet that the AAPD will not be terribly supportive of measures to reduce soft-drink consumption. At best, it will probably be silent on such matters. At worst, it will support its generous new friend."

"American Dietetic Association, the leading professional association for registered dietitians takes outright donations from food companies. It also lets companies fund fact sheets: The National Soft Drink Association (United States) "sponsors" the association's fact sheet on soft drinks; McDonald's sponsors "Nutrition on the Go," and so on."

The corporate kickbacks keep the many medical and health organisations tight-lipped on the perils of soft drink consumption while most of the media find it very hard to resist billions of advertisement contracts.

Despite all these corporate strategies to lure away the public watchdogs, sometimes things go beyond suppression as it did in 1999 when many European countries were forced to ban Coca-Cola. In 1999 June, the highly technical and most lofty claims of quality maintenance by the soft drink giant were exposed as 100 people were hospitalised after downing Fanta in Belgium. The Belgian authorities ordered a ban on all Coca-Cola's drinks within hours of hearing that more than 40 schoolgirls had been taken to hospital after consuming Coca-Cola products. On June 8, 26 children from one school developed nausea, headache, fatigue, palpitations, abdominal discomfort, and malaise after having drunk bottled Coca-Cola. They were taken by ambulance to a hospital where 18 remained for observation. Over the next 2 days, several other children from the same school were also taken to hospital. Hundreds of people contacted the National Poison Centre of Belgium to report complaints after having Coca-Cola beverages. Stores across Belgium removed all beverages of the Coca Cola from their shelves.

The Coca-Cola related illnesses were reported from France and Netherlands also. The authorities in Paris and Luxembourg subsequently banned coke products. Similar curbs were implemented in Spanish, and German markets. The company was forced to recall its products from the market on June 9, making it the biggest product recall by the company. The Coca-Cola Company admitted to committing errors that may have caused the illness, blaming mistakes at two different plants, one in Belgium and one

in Dunkirk in France.

On June 15, the Coca-Cola Company announced that they had identified two causes for this outbreak. Mr. Philippe Lenfant, director general, of Coca-Cola Enterprises Belgium, told the media that the cause of the outbreak was on account of using a wrong Carbon Dioxide to add carbonation in the Soft Drink by a bottling plant at Antwerp and in another plant at Dunkirk, France, contamination was due to a fungicide. In the bottles from one Belgian plant, “bad carbon dioxide” was to blame and a “fungicide” applied on transport pallets had contaminated the outside of some cans from the Dunkirk plant. The company said that the fungicide sprayed on wooden pallets would have smeared on some Coca-Cola cans, and it would have entered the cans or the drink. However, the company and some toxicological experts blamed mass hysteria for the hundreds of scared phone calls by the victims to the poison alert centres in Belgium received daily. The Company considered it as mass sociogenic illness as they claimed that such massive spread is not possible on account of the “bad carbon dioxide” or fungicide. These claims couldn’t save the company from bearing the grunt of health conscious consumers.

1. www.mercola.com
- 2 ,3. Pesticides in soft drinks; CSE, New Delhi, 2003
4. Waterwars, Vandana Siva
5. www.mcspotlight.org
6. Jeff Cronin, “For wealth and no health”, communications department at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, www.alternet.net

When you drink Coca-Cola, you take in gas, water, synthetic colours, acids and many unknown substances, which the company deliberately wants you to be ignorant of. The drink, as it goes down, you feel energized and fresh. But a number of health hazards are in store for you in each drop you take. Here is an excerpt from Dr Mercola’s website.

Obesity

Reporting in The Lancet, a British medical journal, a team of Harvard researchers presented the first evidence linking soft drink consumption to childhood obesity. They found that 12-year-olds

who drank soft drinks regularly were more likely to be overweight than those who didn't. For each additional daily serving of sugar-sweetened soft drink consumed during the nearly two-year study, the risk of obesity increased 1.6 times.

Tooth Decay

Here's one health effect that even the soft drink industry admits, grudgingly, has merit. In a carefully worded statement, the NSDA says, "there's no scientific evidence that consumption of sugars per se has any negative effect other than dental caries." But the association also correctly notes that soft drinks aren't the sole cause of tooth decay. In fact, a lot of sugary foods, from fruit juices to candy and even raisins and other dried fruit, have what dentists refer to as "cariogenic properties," which is to say they can cause tooth decay. A study of nearly 3,200 Americans 9 to 29 years old conducted between 1971 and 1974 showed a direct link between tooth decay and soft drinks. Numerous other studies have shown the same link throughout the world, from Sweden to Iraq.

But sugar isn't the only ingredient in soft drinks that causes tooth problems. The acids in soda pop are also notorious for etching tooth enamel in ways that can lead to cavities.

Caffeine Dependence

The stimulant properties and dependence potential of caffeine in soda are well documented, as are their effects on children. The soft drink industry agrees that caffeine causes the same effects in children as adults, but officials also note that there is wide variation in how people respond to caffeine. The simple solution, the industry says, is to choose a soda pop that is caffeine-free. All big soda makers offer products with either low or no caffeine. Colas contain 35 to 38 milligrams of caffeine per 12-ounce can, or roughly 28 percent of the amount found in an 8-ounce cup of coffee. But few know that diet colas — usually chosen by those who are trying to dodge calories and/or sugar — often pack a lot more caffeine. A 12-ounce can of Diet Coke, for example, has about 42 milligrams of caffeine — seven more than the same amount of Coke Classic. A can of Pepsi One has about 56 milligrams of caffeine — 18 milligrams more than both regular Pepsi and Diet Pepsi. The fact that kids

have withdrawal signs and symptoms when the caffeine is stopped is a good indication that something has been profoundly disturbed in the brain. There is little good research on the effects of caffeine on kids' developing brains.

Bone Weakening

Animal studies demonstrate that phosphorus, a common ingredient in soda, can deplete bones of calcium. And two recent human studies suggest that girls who drink more soda are more prone to broken bones. Animal studies — mostly involving rats — point to clear and consistent bone loss with the use of cola beverages. But as scientists like to point out, humans and rats are not exactly the same. Phosphorus appears to weaken bones by promoting the loss of calcium. With less calcium available, the bones become more porous and prone to fracture.

There's growing concern that even a few cans of soda today can be damaging when they are consumed during the peak bone-building years of childhood and adolescence. A 1996 study published in the *Journal of Nutrition* by the FDA's Office of Special Nutritionals noted that a pattern of high phosphorus/low calcium consumption, common in the American diet, is not conducive to optimising peak bone mass in young women.

A 1994 Harvard study of bone fractures in teenage athletes found a strong association between cola beverage consumption and bone fractures in 14-year-old girls. The girls who drank cola were about five times more likely to suffer bone fractures than girls who didn't consume soda pop.

Besides, to many researchers, the combination of rising obesity and bone weakening has the potential to synergistically undermine future health. Adolescents and kids don't think long-term. But what happens when these soft-drinking people become young or middle-aged adults and they have osteoporosis, sedentary living and obesity?

(*The Amazing Statistics and Dangers of Soda Pop*, Sally Squires, mercola. Com)

The properties of COKE:

1. In many states (in the USA) the highway patrol carries two

gallons of coke in the truck to remove blood from the highway after a car accident.

2. You can put a T-bone steak in a bowl of Coke and it will be gone in two days.

3. To clean a toilet: Pour a can of Coca-Cola into the toilet bowl and let the "real thing" sit for one hour, then flush clean. The acids in Coke remove stains from vitreous China.

4. To remove rust spots from chrome car bumpers: Rub the bumper with a rumpled-up piece of Reynolds Wrap aluminium foil dipped in Coca-Cola.

5. To clean corrosion from car battery terminals: Pour a can of Coca-Cola over the terminals to bubble away the corrosion.

6. To loosen a rusted bolt: Applying a cloth soaked in Coca-Cola to the rusted bolt for several minutes.

7. To remove grease from clothes: Empty a can of coke into a load of greasy clothes, add detergent, and run through a regular cycle. The Coca-Cola will help loosen grease stains.

8. It will also clean road haze from your windshield.

9. The active ingredient in Coke is phosphoric acid. Its pH is 2.8. It will dissolve a nail in about 4 days.

2. To carry Coca-Cola syrup (the concentrate) the commercial truck must use the Hazardous material place cards reserved for highly corrosive materials.

3. The distributors of Coke have been using it to clean the engines of their trucks for about 20 years!

Now the question is...would you like a coke or a glass of water?

DUOPOLY AND DOUBLE STANDARDS- CSE REPORT ON PESTICIDE RESIDUES IN SOFT DRINKS

Speaking on June 16, 1999, just after Coca-Cola was banned in Belgium and France, from the company headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, Coca-Cola Company Chairman M. Douglas Ivester defended his company's 113-year record of quality. "I want to reassure our consumers, customers and government Officials in Europe that The Coca-Cola Company is taking all necessary Steps to ensure that all our products meet the highest quality standards. Nothing less is acceptable to us and we will not rest until we ensure that this job is complete. We deeply regret any problems encountered by our European consumers in the past few days."

On august 5, 2003 a Delhi based NGO, Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) made public a report, quoting lab tests that 12 major soft drink brands of Coca-Cola and Pepsi, sold in and around Delhi contained pesticide residues above hazardous limits. The report said that the tests found high levels of pesticide residues in these drinks and warned people and government to take precautionary measures. '113-year record of quality' and 'the highest quality standards' found no mention in this new context. Instead, the cola companies tried to question the credibility of the agency that carried out the tests.

The tests conducted in the Pollution Monitoring Laboratory (PML), of CSE revealed that the colas contained pesticides, lead, arsenic and other poisonous chemicals that can cause cancer, damage to the nervous, immune and reproductive systems. The tests found residues of lindane, malathion, chlorpyrifos, and the banned DDT in Pepsi and Coca-Cola drinks. The report pointed to the fact that

the pesticide levels in the Indian samples are respectively 36 and 30 times higher than EU safety standards. The levels of pesticide found in these tests were 30 to 35 times higher than permitted in Europe.

The tested soft drinks included Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Mountain Dew, Diet Pepsi, Mirinda Orange, Mirinda Lemon, Blue Pepsi, 7Up, Fanta, Limca, Sprite and Thums Up. Coca-Cola and Pepsi were detected having almost similar concentrations of pesticide residues. Total pesticides in all PepsiCo brands on an average were 0.0180 mg/l (milligramme per litre), 36 times higher than the EEC limit for total pesticides (0.0005 mg/l). Total pesticides in all Coca-Cola brands on an average were 0.0150 mg/l, 30 times higher than the EEC limit. Mirinda Lemon, a coke product topped the chart among all the tested brand samples, with a total pesticide concentration of 0.0352 mg/l.

The report on the deadly pesticide content in the soft drinks blew alarm signals to the consumers and the Indian parliament banned the sale of colas in the parliament premises. The sale of soft drinks tumbled in India and abroad. The CSE report alerted the public on the impacts of the lethal toxics that are present in the drinks. All the samples tested had high levels of Lindane, DDT, Malathion and chlorpyrifos in them.

Lindane is a mortal pesticide that damages human liver, kidney neural and immune systems and induces birth defects cancer and death. Lindane is also known to adversely affect the reproductive performance in males and disrupt the estrous cycle in females. It is also warned that lindane decreases sexual receptivity.

The PML analysis found DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) and its metabolites in 81% of the soft drink samples. They have been linked to altered sexual development in various species, to a decrease semen quality and to increased risk of breast cancer in women. These are carcinogenic and study in mice has found that these would cause tumor in liver. Once taken in, DDT is stored cumulatively in body fat and excretion is extremely slow. Chlorpyrifos, which affects the brain cell development, was also present in all the soft drink samples tested. Malathion was present in 97% of the samples analysed with an average concentration of Malathion (0.0087mg/L), which is 87 times higher than the EEC limit.

The CSE report hastened to add that, “no pesticide residues were detected in the Coca-Cola and Pepsi samples from USA manufactured by the same multinationals.” This vividly portrays the disregard and double standard of the multinationals towards third world markets and towards the safety of the third world consumers. When ‘bad carbon dioxide’ in Coca-Cola caused health problems in Belgium, the company was quick to act with the largest recall in its history. But when the reports in India clearly exposed high levels of pesticide residues in Coca-Cola and Pepsi products, the corporate giants tried to mislead the public by maligning the credibility of the agency that conducted the study. Despite their fierce rivalry, the cola giants immediately closed ranks and threatened legal action against CSE. In a joint press conference on August 5, in Delhi, the chief executive officer of Coke and the chairman of the Indian wing of PepsiCo, appeared before the cameras sporting their brands in hand, and proclaiming the purity of the drinks.

Both the multinational companies rejected the CSE report as “unreliable” and threatened to take legal action. The chairman of PepsiCo, Rajiv Bakshi, said, “Our Company is well within the limits of the pesticide residue norms set by the European Union for water used in products within public domain. We conform to all norms and are open to all testing by an internationally-accredited independent laboratory and by experienced people.” The chief executive officer of Coke, Sanjiv Gupta, said, “Our product is world class and is the same we sell in Europe and the U.S. These are tested by top grade labs like Vimta in Hyderabad and TNO in the Netherlands.” Claiming that this was a “bigger” controversy than the previous drinking water report, Mr. Gupta said his company had not moved the court previously because it thought “the controversy did not directly threaten the reputation of the company”. (An earlier study by the CSE had found pesticide residues in the bottled water brands of Pepsi and Coca-Cola)

On 8th August, Pepsi filed a petition in Delhi High Court alleging CSE study was unreliable and motivated, and calling for the establishment of an expert committee to review the pesticide levels. It also sought to restrain CSE, from publishing further material, and to remove the information from its website. Three days later the company informed the court that they won’t press the charges

and allegations made by them in their petition against the CSE report for now.

The government, on August 22, left the whole issue to the investigation by a Joint parliamentary committee. Meanwhile, the test results of the Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI), Mysore, and the Central Food Laboratory (CFL), Kolkata revealed that the samples of both Coke and Pepsi contained levels of pesticides like Lindane and DDT that were higher than permissible EU norms. DDT was 12 times higher than the EU norms in 58 per cent of the samples. Lindane was found in all the samples and was higher than EU norms in 33 per cent of the samples. Chlorpyrifos was also found in all the samples and exceeded EU norms in 75 per cent samples. Blue Pepsi had pesticide residues 5.2 times higher than the EU standards, the highest levels in all samples of all brands. While Pepsi, Diet Pepsi and Limca cleared the EU bar.

The cola's still continued with their public relations campaign claiming their drinks toxic free. Pepsi placed ads advising consumers, "refresh your faith and don't hold back your taste buds." Coke assured the customers through pops, "Coca-Cola refreshes you with world-class and safe products in India." Pepsi used an earlier statement by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Sushma Swaraj in advertisements claiming as the minister gave a clean chit to colas. The company had to apologize and retract its advertisement as the government threatened to take action against the misinformation campaign.

No cola bigwigs apologized for the toxicity in their drinks. No one assured Indian consumers that they would take necessary 'steps to ensure that all our products meet the highest quality'. We didn't hear them thumping their chest saying, "We will not rest until we ensure that this job is complete." The deep regrets and tears of corporate responsibility and good manners were conspicuously absent in the Indian context.

Seven

...TO FETCH A PAIL OF WATER

‘More than a billion people lack access to safe drinking water. More than five million people, most of them children, die each year from illnesses caused from drinking unsafe water. Global consumption of water is doubling every 20 years, more than twice the rate of human population growth. If this situation continue unregulated and new methods of water conservation adopted, by 2025 the demand for freshwater is expected to rise to 56 percent above the currently available amount. And the result: 2/3 of the world population will have no access to drinking water.’

These are some appalling forecasts made on the water availability in the coming decades. When the world frantically search for alternative strategies to harvest and conserve water for the predicted drought, the multinational water giants are busy with their plans to dominate water market. They are all out to cash in on muddled waters. The corporate water giants are dreaming the rosy days when in future, to quote Word Bank, in one way or another, water would be moving around the world as oil does now. I

The global players have already gained significant advances in the burgeoning water markets all over the world. They have smelled blood and are on the prowl. With the institutional support from the WB, IMF and WTO, and with the profuse encouragement from national governments in the third world, the water empires of big corporations are growing rapidly beyond national boundaries. They are aggressively accelerating their operations in Third World countries forcing the debt-struck governments to abandon public water services and hand over control of local water supplies to private

interests. As the water barons get a free hand, they impose rate hikes making water inaccessible for millions of poor people. In Bolivia and South Africa, where the corporate grip on water is so firm, the poorest people have to fight for water and egalitarian distribution. The Bolivian poor were forced to remit water bills that amounted to more than 20% of their monthly income.

The bottled water market also offered huge prospects and the MNCs including Coca-Cola and Pepsi took a ready plunge in to the business. Vandana Siva, the author of 'Water Wars', says, "water scarcity is clearly a source of corporate profits." she quotes from an annual report of Coca-Cola that clearly depicts the corporate wet dreams: "All of us in the Coca-Cola family wake up each morning knowing that every single one of the world's 5.6 billion people will get thirsty that day. If we make it impossible for these 5.6 billion to escape Coca-Cola, then we assure our future success for many years to come. Doing anything else is not an option."

Coke has Dasani, launched in 1999 and sold in North and South America, and Bon Aqua, introduced in the late 1980s and available mainly in European market, along with a number of other bottled water brands in its product range. Pepsi's water bottle brand is christened as Aquafina. These global players have big stakes in the bottled water industry, which is growing at an annual rate of 20 percent. In 2002, nearly 100 billion litres of bottled water were sold around the world - most of it in non-reusable plastic containers, bringing in profits of \$22 billion to this highly-polluting industry. 2

Coca-Cola and Pepsi are gearing up to exploit the promising water market by invading new areas and buying up local bottled water brands. Coke is acquiring smaller water companies all over the world to gain monopolies in local markets. While soft drinks still make up about 85% of Coca Cola's business, its global water business grew by 68% in 2002.

?In the United States and Canada, Coca Cola distributes three water brands: Dasani (owned by Coca Cola), Dannon and Evian (both owned by French companies and distributed by Coca Cola). Coke has its water brands in Chile, Australia, Poland, China, Belgium, UK, Indonesia, Greece, Romania, Switzerland, Japan, Turkey and Venezuela. Mexico had a coke water brand, Ceil, since 1997. In 2002, the company acquired Risco, a local water company solidifying its presence in the market. Coca-Cola entered Indian

bottled water market with Kinley in the year 2000.

One year after its debut, Kinley became the second largest retail bottled water brand in India after Bisleri, an Indian brand which enjoyed more than 40% of the market. A couple of local and multinational brands – Pepsi’s Aquafina, Nestlé, Britannia, etc- take up the remaining market share. The packaged water market amounted up to \$145 million (Rs. 8 billion) and registered a growth rate of nearly 40 per cent per annum.³ Kinley and Pepsi’s Aquafina sidelined many of the small and medium players to buy-outs and exclusive licensing deals. In less than two years after the launch in India, Aquafina gained 11 percent of the market.

As the multinational and local water bottlers thrived, impoverished villagers struggled in their water-starved lands. The growth in the bottled water market meant more starved bowels and parched agricultural fields. Each bottle meant an increase in the water depletion levels in the wells near the bottling plants. In other words, the water-barons sell, what they claim ‘pure drinking water’ by snatching away the water pots from the local people.

Anjali Kamat relates the story of Athur and Mathur villages in Tiravallur district in Tamilnadu where water bottlers excessively and recklessly exploit water resources. In the story posted in the Corpwatch India website, she says ‘The Coca Cola, for instance, sources a bulk of its Kinley brand of bottled water from MVR Mineral Water, a contract bottler with a factory in Athur village. The bottler reports that 132,000 litres of groundwater are extracted each day. Of this, only 100,000 litres are used for bottling purposes. The remainder - at least 25 percent of the water drawn - is discharged as effluents or lost to other processes. Virtually every packaged water company has externalized its costs to communities such as those in Athur and Mathur- communities that have been forced to contribute to the profits of these companies by involuntarily compromising their water security.’⁴

Those who can afford, guzzle bottled waters believing that these sparkling bottles are pure for sure. The companies spend millions on advertisement (and lesser money on water treatment) to ensure people that the drinks are “clean”. Reports from different parts of the world confirm that even the so-called international brands bottle up poorly treated municipal water. US National Resources Defence Council analysed 103 brands of bottled water in 1999 and found

that they are no better than tap water. Most of the brands contained arsenic and *E. coli* and one fourth of the samples found no qualms in bottling 'pure' tap water. In India, a study by the Consumer Education and Research Centre, Ahmedabad, found that none of the 13 samples of bottled waters was free of bacteria, even though some brands claimed to be germ-free and 100% bacteria free.⁵ Now the bottled water brands have stopped sporting the "pure drinking water" label in their bottles.

The Delhi based NGO, Centre for Science and Environment came out with a startling report that majority of 34-bottled water brands distributed in the national capital contained high levels of pesticide residues. These brands included coke's Kinley, Pepsi's Aquafina and the top *desi* brand, Bisleri along with other local packaged drinking water brands. The pesticides residues found were of the deadliest kind. gamma-Hexachlorocyclohexane (g-HCH, or lindane), DDT, Malathion and Chlorpyrifos were found in the samples. Twenty-nine out of the 34 samples were malathion-positive. Concentration levels ranged from 0.0004 mg/l in Aquafina to as much as 0.04 mg/l in Bisleri. Chlorpyrifos, an insecticide commonly used in homes or restaurants, against cockroaches or termites, was detected in 28 out of the 34 samples. This extremely toxic chemical was found in quantities exceeding the maximum permissible limits by huge margins - on an average of all samples, it exceeded the European Economic Commission standard by 49 times. For instance, in No 1 McDowell - I (0.037 mg/l) it was 370 times more than the EEC permissible limit for a particular pesticide. Bisleri (109 times), Kinley of Coca Cola (109 times) and Aquafina of Pepsi was 23 times higher than the EEC permissible limit for an individual pesticide.

The furore over the revelations has put the corporate culprits, as well as the *desi* players, in a fix. Instead of meeting the required safety measures, the industry came out in the open with concerted lobbying efforts to force the government not to press its decision on adopting European Union norms. The industry asked the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the issue, to withhold a notification that had adopted EU-norms on the pesticide residues in the packaged drinking water, even as the Health Ministry notification regarding the same is slated to come in to effect from January 1, 2004.

However, the multi million-advertisement campaigns have helped the water brands to keep the popular misconceptions on the safety and purity of bottled water, intact. Market reaps the same fortunes as it did before. And the MNCs continue their squeeze to the last drop. The very same water looters would swear by their rain-harvesting efforts to rejuvenate the soil and to conserve groundwater resources. In the near future, we will have to witness these water barons sponsoring drought relief endeavours in the villages surrounding their bottling plants. Yes, it happened in Plachimada. The Coca-Cola distributed truckloads of water to the water-starved villagers and offered to sponsor piped drinking water facilities in the village! And let's pray and hope: "One way or another, water will soon be moved around the world as oil is now."

Truly, some portends are already visible. The corporate sponsors have grown highly sensitive to the world's water-woes. In early September 2002, activist Maude Barlow, author of "Blue Gold: The Global Water Crisis and the Commodification of the World's Water Supply," was dumbfounded as she witnessed the true dimensions of 'corporate highjack of water'. She had, "one of the most cynical and awful things" ever seen in her life," as she joined water activists from around South Africa and the rest of the world in Johannesburg to call for an end to the "corporatization of water" at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). In Johannesburg, delegates met at the Coca-Cola sponsored U.N. conference on water, inside swank meeting spaces, surrounded by fountains and water-themed displays including billboards for DeBeers diamonds declaring, "Water is forever." Here, the officials advanced their agenda of mass privatisation of water resources as a means of dealing with a global water crisis. 7

Remember that the members of the 'Coca-Cola family wake up each morning knowing that every single one of the world's 5.6 billion people will get thirsty that day.' And of course, they will provide bottles full of water drawn from your backyard well - come on, pay the price and take a swig.

1 **The 3rd World Water Forum: A Civil Society Backgrounder** by Maude Barlow, Council of Canadians <http://www.citizen.org/cmep/Water>

2 **The 3rd World Water Forum: A Civil Society Backgrounder** by Maude Barlow, Council of Canadians <http://www.citizen.org/cmep/Water>

3 Ratna Bhushan, Bold and Bisleri, Business Line, April 25, 2002.

4. Water Profiteers, Anjali Kamat, 28, 2002, www.corpwatchindia.org
- 5 Water Wars, Vandana siva
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- 7 New Water Order, Holly Wren Spaulding, October 3, 2002, www.AlterNet.org.

Conclusion

The essence of Globalisation, as Ralph Nader, famous American Consumer advocate puts it, is the subjugation of human rights, of labour rights, consumer, environmental and democratic rights, to the imperatives of global trade and investment. Coca-Cola acts as the harbinger of this new wave of domination, euphemistically called globalisation, in many countries round the globe. With profit and market domination in mind, the soft drink giant has targeted third world countries and resources. The MNC ensures its prospective success through ruthless exploitation combined with total disregard for life and people of the invaded territory. Coca-Cola thus becomes a perfect case of Multinational companies' parasitic existence.

The MNCs amass wealth and power by exploiting the resources and manpower in exchange of huge investments, which they reclaim with in no time. The companies would benefit by cheap labour and an unrestrained access to natural resources. By shifting their operations to the poor countries, these companies could easily evade the stringent environmental and labour standards in the developed countries. They would boast of creating jobs and opportunities and of course they would speak high of their efforts of "giving back to the communities". Actually locals have to be satisfied by a few low paid menial jobs.

Coca-Cola perfectly follows the tribe's maxim. It sucks dry natural resources in Indian villages, dumps toxic sludge in agricultural fields, and muffles the cries for rights in Columbia and elsewhere. More over, the consumers of the drinks are given a soft and steady kill. Thus coke becomes globalisation's *real thing*, introducing the people to the global food habits and preparing them to the ways and manners under new-market imperialism.

As coke and Pepsi aim global thirst, other corporate predators would come in tandem, with better tools of domination and with higher stakes in the basic necessities of mankind. They would come

in chorus and capture us alive, grab their share and leave the rest to the local hyenas. Now the domination begins from the basics- water, food and agriculture and the next is Oxygen cylinders.

Every drop of Coke and Pepsi has thousands of acres of parched lands, polluted water, dry wells and indigenous people pushed away from life. When corporate media beam with glitzy advertisements of soft drinks, hapless workers are brutally treated in the bottling plants. *Soft kill.*

Fanta babies would fill the third world as the soft drink giants chase their proclaimed goal of global dominance. And as the over-sugared children grow with fragile bones and sluggish brain, branded and tattooed with corporate badge, the bigger predators would indulge in capitalist orgies. "... we'll some day sell a variety of products on a daily basis to every living person on Earth - all five billion of them!" - an annual report of Pepsi co. leaves no one guessing. These big corporations would then scramble for more 'share of what goes in to the people's stomachs.' The end-result is never-ending exploitation.

If the essence of globalisation is violation of every human right for profit and corporate goals, the meaning of *coca-colanisation* is how a multinational corporation can go Scot-free even after presenting misery to the consumers and local people.

Related books and web resources

* Merchants of Drink, Frederic Clairmont & John Cavanagh, Third World Network,

* WaterWars, Vandanasiva, SouthEnds Press, USA, 2002

* No Logo, naomiklein, Harper Collins, USA 2000

* For God, Country and Coca-Cola, the definitive history of the great American soft drink and the company that makes it. Mark Pendergrast, Basicbooks, new york, 2000

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Web resources

www.corpwatchindia.org

www.cseindia.org

www.downtoearth.org.in

www.newint.org

www.altpress.org

www.mcspotlight.org

www.twinside.org

www.cocacola.com

www.pepsi.com

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www.freeway.org

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www.treat-your-workers.org

www.healthgap.org

www.mercola.com

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by L C Jain 2001 pp131 Rs 75

Large Dams in India: environmental, social & economic impacts Ed by Shekhar singh and ranab Banerji 2002 pp338 Rs 500

The Water Manifesto : Arguments for a world Water Contract

Ricardo Petrella Rs.300

The rule of water: state craft, Ecology and collective Action in south Asia by David Mosse Rs. 675

Rain Water Harvesting by Sree Padre Rs. 110.00

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The process of cola-nisation follows a well designed scheme. Meticulous campaigns on hygiene and health would stress on water quality. Synchronized ad campaigns would present bottled waters and soft drinks as 'the best friend thirst ever had'. They take water from our land and leave our soil desiccated.

Neo-colonisation, euphemistically called globalisation, starts off from the basic needs of the humans- water, natural resources, freedom and their right to live. Coca-Cola fulfils all these criteria to become globalisation's 'real thing'. The history of the multinational leaves no one in doubt about it- It is always Coca-Cola, the toxic presence and the harbinger of the worst to come. A book from the land of resistance- coke's Waterloo.

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